

**FROM CHAMBERLAIN
TO CHURCHILL**

**THE PENGUIN
HANSARD**

*Taken verbatim from
the
House of Commons
Official Report of
Parliamentary Debates*



THE STORY OF HANSARD

(OR THE STORY OF THE PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES)

Secret diplomacy is familiar in foreign affairs but it is not well known that secret discussion of home affairs was jealously maintained by the House of Commons for many centuries of its history. The record of things done was available in the printed Votes and Proceedings of the House and in the Journal but the publication of things said was punishable as a breach of the privileges of the House until towards the end of the eighteenth century.

SECRECY BREAKS DOWN

The first breaches in the tradition of secrecy were made in the seventeenth century when propaganda for the Parliamentary cause in the civil war led the House to ignore occasional unofficial printing of speeches in Parliament. By the middle of the eighteenth century editors found that with the increasing interest in Parliament there was a popular demand for reports of Parliamentary debates and thinly disguised accounts of what Sir Robert Walpole said were being printed in the new Monthly Magazines.

DR JOHNSON AND THE SENATE OF LILLIPUTIA

Editors and printers were summoned and fined but the reports continued as debates of fictitious political clubs such as the Proceedings of the Lower Room of the Robin Hood Society. One of the most famous was the Report of the Senate of Lilliputia which appeared in The Gentleman's Magazine and was edited for some years by Samuel Johnson. No notes could be taken in the House and speeches could be reported only from memory so that with such an editor it is not surprising that some of the speeches show an eloquence of which their supposed authors were probably quite incapable. Complimented and applauded for a brilliant speech of Pitt's which read like Demosthenes the Doctor replied: "I saved appearances tolerably well but I took care the Whig dogs did not have the best of it." Direct suppression ceased after 1771 after a legal battle in which the famous John Wilkes played a part for freedom of speech and the newspapers stimulated by the public demand continued to publish reports based on reporters' memories. Of Memory Woodfall it was related with amazement how he filled three or four columns daily in the Morning Chronicle with the debates he had listened to overnight.

WILLIAM COBBETT

The real advance to a more impartial account occurred during the Napoleonic Wars when William Cobbett followed his History of Parliament 1066 to 1802 with the printing of parliamentary debates as a supplement to his 'Political Register', which had

[Continued on page 3 of cover]

THE PENGUIN HANSARD

VOL. I

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THE PENGUIN HANSARD

VOLUME I

FROM CHAMBERLAIN TO CHURCHILL



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INTRODUCTION

It is doubtful if any free parliament has ever succeeded in making its proceedings adequately known to the citizen body which elected it. In Great Britain only a few hundred copies of *Hansard* are sold. People who wish to know the proceedings of the House of Commons have to rely on press reports unless they can afford the daily issues or the later bound volumes of the Official Report. Press summaries of the Debates are based primarily on news—of little value. They cannot, therefore, provide more than a rough partial record. The *Penguin Hansard* is the first attempt to report the House of Commons to the public.

Volume One of the *Penguin Hansard* traces the first phase of the war and its political reactions as mirrored in the House of Commons. All speeches are quoted verbatim. They have often been cut, even heavily cut. Omissions are usually indicated by a short sequence of dots in the text—thus Very occasionally a few sentences have been inserted to indicate the occasion of a debate or its contemporary colouring. All such insertions, which occur only in the earlier pages, are printed in italics, and are the sole responsibility of the publishers, as are the selections from the Debates. The division into chapters is for convenience and easier reading only. If a few verbal connecting links—a 'however' or a 'therefore'—every now and then have been pruned away, the purpose was editorial only. In selecting material from the debates and cutting its length down, no other aim than to shorten the record has been pursued. The use of a speech has in no case been modified and no partisan or personal consideration has determined any abridgment. The process of cutting may have heightened the drama—spoken and written words often gain thus—but this volume it is claimed, contains a record, true in substance and in spirit, of a great phase in the history of Parliament.

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CHAPTER I

THE HOUSE OF COMMONS CLOSES ITS RANKS

On 24th August, 1939, the House of Commons, called together from its summer recess, took steps to meet the threat of immediate war. The Prime Minister (Mr. Neville Chamberlain) introduced a Bill conferring upon His Majesty emergency powers and making provision for the immediate enactment of necessary legislation. The extracts from speeches which follow relate either to this Bill or to the other consequential Bills which were passed through all their Parliamentary stages on the same date or shortly afterwards. The Emergency Powers Bill was accepted by a vote of 427 for to 2 against. The other Bills were approved with similar unanimity.

24th August, 1939.

THE PRIME MINISTER (MR. CHAMBERLAIN): When at the beginning of this month hon. members separated for the Summer Recess I think there can have been few among us who anticipated that many weeks would elapse before we should find ourselves meeting here again. Unfortunately, those anticipations have been fulfilled, and the Government have felt obliged to ask that Parliament should be summoned again, in order to take such new and drastic steps as are required by the gravity of the situation. . . .

The measures that we have taken up to now are of a precautionary and defensive character, and to give effect to our determination to put this country in a state of preparedness to meet any emergency, but I wish emphatically to repudiate any suggestion, if such a suggestion should be made, that these measures imply an act of menace. Nothing that we have done or that we propose to do menaces the legitimate interests of Germany. It is not an act of menace to prepare to help friends to defend themselves against force. If neighbours wishing to live together peacefully in friendly relations find that one of them is contemplating apparently an aggressive act of force against another of them, and is making open preparations for action, it is not a menace for the others to announce their intention of aiding the one who is the subject of this threat. . . .

On numerous occasions I have stated my conviction that war between our two countries, admitted on all sides to be the greatest calamity that could occur, is not desired either by our own people or the German people. With this fact in mind I informed the

German Chancellor that, in our view, there was nothing in questions arising between Poland and Germany which could be, and should not be, resolved without the use of force, if only a situation of confidence could be restored. We expressed our willingness to assist in creating the conditions in which such negotiations could take place. The present state of tension creates great difficulties, and I expressed the view that if there could be a truce on all sides to press polemics and all other forms of incitement suitable conditions might be established for direct negotiations between Germany and Poland upon the points at issue. The negotiations could, of course, deal with the complaints made on either side about the protection of minorities.

The German Chancellor's reply includes what amounts to a re-statement of the German thesis that Eastern Europe is a sphere in which Germany ought to have a free hand. If we—this is the thesis—or any country having less direct interest choose to interfere, the blame for the ensuing conflict will be ours. This thesis entirely misapprehends the British position. We do not seek to claim a special position for ourselves in Eastern Europe. We do not think of asking Germany to sacrifice her national interests, but we cannot agree that national interests can only be secured by the shedding of blood or the destruction of the independence of other States. With regard to the relations between Poland and Germany the German Chancellor in his reply to me has referred again to the situation at Danzig, drawing attention to the position of the City and the Corridor, and to the offer which he made early this year to settle these questions by methods of negotiation. I have repeatedly refuted the allegation that it was our guarantee to Poland that decided the Polish Government to refuse the proposal then made. That guarantee was not, in fact, given until after the Polish refusal had been conveyed to the German Government. In view of the delicacy of the situation I must refrain for the present from any further comment upon the communications which have just passed between the two Governments. Catastrophe has not yet come upon us. We must, therefore, still hope that reason and sanity may find a way to reassert themselves. The pronouncement we made recently and what I have said to-day reflects, I am sure, the views of the French Government, with whom we have maintained the customary close contact in pur-

Oslo States, after the meeting in Brussels yesterday of the representatives of those States. It will be evident from what I have said that His Majesty's Government share the hopes to which that appeal gave expression, and earnestly trust that effect will be given to it.

The Foreign Secretary, in a speech made on 29th June to the Royal Institute of International Affairs, set out the fundamental bases of British foreign policy. His observations on that subject, were, I believe, received with general approval. The first basis is our determination to resist methods of force. The second basis is our recognition of the world desire to pursue the constructive work of building peace. If we were once satisfied my Noble Friend said, that the intentions of others were the same as our own, and if we were satisfied that all wanted peaceful solutions, then, indeed, we could discuss problems which are to day causing the world so much anxiety. That definition of the basic fundamental ground of British policy still stands. We want to see established an international order based upon mutual understanding and mutual confidence and we cannot build such an order unless it conforms to certain principles which are essential to the establishment of confidence and trust. Those principles must include the observance of international undertakings when they have once been entered into, and the renunciation of force in the settlement of differences. It is because those principles to which we attach such vital importance, seem to us to be in jeopardy that we have undertaken these tremendous and unprecedented responsibilities.

If, despite all our efforts to find the way of peace—and God knows I have tried my best—if in spite of all that, we find ourselves forced to embark upon a struggle which is bound to be fraught with suffering and misery for all mankind and the end of which no man can foresee, if that should happen, we shall not be fighting for the political future of a far away city in a foreign land, we shall be fighting for the preservation of those principles of which I have spoken, the destruction of which would involve the destruction of all possibility of peace and security for the peoples of the world. This issue of peace or war does not rest with us, and I trust that those with whom the responsibility does lie will think of the millions of human beings whose fate depends upon their actions. For ourselves, we have a united country behind us, and in this critical hour I believe that we in this House of Commons, will stand together, and that this afternoon we shall show the world that, as we think, so we will act, as a united nation.

MR GREENWOOD. I think the House is indebted to the Prime Minister for the very clear and full statement he has made of the situation which has developed since we separated. His statement was one of the utmost gravity. The war clouds are gathering, Europe and the world are in the shadows. I think it is the hope of us all on all sides of the House, that, even yet, those clouds may be dispelled and the shadows pass away. I

would reinforce what the Prime Minister said about the responsibility of those who may drive Europe into war. A terrible terrifying responsibility lies on the shoulders of him that lets loose the hounds of war.

Now, if I may say some words to which some exception may be taken, I would say what we have said in this House before. This situation has arisen very largely, in our view, from the mistaken policies of the National Government which I and my friends have strongly criticised in the past. I withdraw nothing personally of what I have said in criticism of those policies; but we are facing a tragic situation, and I do not therefore, in this time of crisis, propose to rake over the embers of the days that are behind us. While we cannot forget the policies of the past, it is clear now that our eyes must peer very closely into the immediate future.

My main purpose is to try to make clear the attitude of the Opposition on the whole situation as regards the general lay of policy. I should like, if I may, to read to the House a declaration which was issued last night by the National Council of Labour. That body is, in a sense, the most weighty body in the Labour movement, representative of both its industrial and political sides. The declaration says:

"The council again declared its desire for a just and peaceful settlement of all international disputes, but repeated the determination of the Labour movement that there should be no weakening of its declared policy of collective resistance to any further act of aggression by the German Government. In view of the growing gravity of the situation, the council reaffirmed its steadfast resolve that the obligations undertaken by Britain in defence of the independence of Poland shall be honoured to the full."

This is a reaffirmation of Labour's established policy, a policy on which it has never wavered, and which it has repeatedly confirmed. We are not supporters of this Government, but let no one think that Labour will ever be a willing party to acquiescing in any further acts of aggression. The world must be made to know that in this attitude of resistance against aggression British Labour is unshaken. The issue, however, is not whether we like this Government or not. My views on this Government are perfectly well known. Our differences will still remain. But the point is that Labour abominates aggression, and believes that only by preventing it, or resisting it, can civilisation and orderly relations between the nations be maintained. I emphasise this because I wish to make it unmistakably plain to those beyond the seas that if, unfortunately, the time comes when this policy has to be implemented, they will not find here a disunited people. Unity on that issue will be complete, and the issue will be faced with confidence and fortitude. . . .

SIR ARCHIBALD SINCLAIR: Like the right hon. gentleman who preceded me, I do not wish to withdraw or abate one jot of the criticism which I have levelled against the policy of His Majesty's Government in the past, but a time when the liberties

of Europe are being threatened by a thrust for world domination, when our own country is in danger and when our homes and families are being deprived slowly, gradually, inexorably of the light and blessing of peace, is no time for controversy, and still less for recrimination. It is a time for closing our ranks and for a demonstration of unity and prompt action by Parliament for in such a demonstration—would, Mr. Speaker, that it has been made a year ago—lies the last hope of convincing the aggressor of the firmness of our purpose and of deterring him from gambling on war for the achievement of his aims. . . .

Let me only say this in conclusion. I have been a steady and consistent critic of the Government's foreign policy, and nothing that has happened in recent weeks since this House rose has given me ground to withdraw my criticism. But now that we are in a crisis, criticism must be put aside. We must rally on the ground of that Chatham House speech which the Prime Minister has just quoted to the House; with those two twin pillars of policy—*determination to resist force on the one hand, and determination also to pursue the constructive work of building peace on the other.* Now that His Majesty's Government in the exercise of a responsibility which none of us in the absence of full information can share, has decided on its course of action, any suggestion of hesitation, disunity or infirmity of purpose would encourage the enemies of peace in Germany. Let us give the world to-day, by speech and action, an impressive and convincing demonstration that, when the vital interests of our country, the moral values of civilised life and the peace of the world are menaced by brutal force, the British Parliament and the British people stand firmly with the people of France, without hatred or hostility towards the German or any other people, in the defence of these principles of international good faith, freedom and justice, on which alone we can establish lasting peace.

MR. MAXTON: . . . But I give to the Prime Minister a complete mandate and complete support for him to go out in the world, a warring world, a world of inflamed passions, a world ready to hurl millions of tons of scrap iron through the air at one another—to go out to the world and make a call for the nations of the world to build a new civilisation, a civilisation which will abolish poverty and inequalities, a civilisation to which Great Britain is prepared to give, not a civilisation out of which some sections of humanity are going to take. The Prime Minister has our support for any action he may take for a great new world campaign for world civilisation. For war, he has no support from us.

MR. EDEN: . . . Everywhere in the world where peoples are still free they are at this moment asking the question—Does this mean war? I believe that at the moment the gravest danger of war lies in the belief of the German people, a belief which has been fostered by every means of a powerful propaganda machine, that whatever action the German Government may take against Poland

will not result in war with this country and France. I believe also that in signing this Pact with Russia the German Government have made the gravest miscalculation. They appear from their own declarations in their own Press to believe that as a consequence of that Pact we should go back on our pledge to Poland. That is unthinkable and the Prime Minister has made that plain. Indeed the leaders of the German people would appear to know little of our history if they are unaware of the fact that the greater the odds and the greater the difficulties which the British people have to face the stronger becomes their determination to stand by those to whom they have pledged their word.

The Prime Minister said that he did not want to take any action in a military sense which might be regarded as provocative. I think we shall all endorse that, but I would add this. I do not believe that the chief danger of war lies in that. I believe that the chief danger of war still lies in the German refusal to believe that we are in earnest in what we say and therefore I say that if any action can be taken in a military sense such action would only add to the deterrent value of the statements which have been made. There are many things that could be done. I think there is another danger and not having the responsibility of office I do not see why I should not state it. It is possible that there are at this moment many people in Germany who believe that in the event of hostilities with Poland they may in a few short weeks or months obtain their military objectives in the East and that having done that, they appear to believe that we should take no further interest in the matter. If there are any who really think that they are making the greatest error in history. Having given our pledge and repeated it, there can be no turning back.

MR. GALLACHER. The country is facing a situation that can become catastrophic. It is still possible to save the situation. If all the peace forces of Europe were brought together peace could still be saved and the independence of Poland could be saved. The British people have never hesitated to face their responsibilities but they are not going to be led into any position that has any semblance of an Imperialist scramble for gain. For the defence of democratic rights they will take a stand. For the defence of the democratic rights of their neighbours they will take a stand. We can only ensure that the people will be united for that purpose if we have a Government which inspires confidence, if we have the democratisation of the Army so that it will never be used for anything other than the defence of democratic rights and if there is complete freedom for the working-class movement. If we can get these things with a Government that represents the true interests of the people and expresses the desires of the people we will face whatever hazards lie before us. The fact that Hitler has had to make a Non Aggression Pact with Russia gives the lie to the stories that were circulated here last year that Germany was invincible and that if we did not submit it would mean war immediately . . .

Miss RATHBONE : . . . The time may come when both Oppositions, and those who are not behind any organised political party, may feel that we have made a mistake in encouraging the Government to believe that we have complete confidence in their power to carry on a war and that we have forgotten—we shall never forget it—the frightful mistakes which have led us to the position in which we are. I appeal to the Government before it is too late to strengthen their forces, and to make this a real National Government. The leaders of the Opposition cannot ask for changes which affect themselves. We all have names in our mind. The right hon. Gentleman the Member for Epping (Mr Churchill) all along has prophesied that these things would happen, but his advice was neglected. Are we going to let the very men who made those mistakes in neglecting our military preparations, and mistakes in their attitude towards Russia and in misunderstanding the mind of Herr Hitler, which have brought us to this pass, carry on the affairs of the country or will they, before it is too late, form a Government which really represents the people, the whole people and nothing but the people?

MR. AMERY. I think we should all agree that we have witnessed a remarkable manifestation of unity of sentiment in this House to-day. The House is united, first of all, in its detestation of war, and, secondly, with very few exceptions, in standing behind the Prime Minister at this moment and in supporting the British Government in standing firm to their pledges, regardless of what has happened between Russia and Germany, or of what may happen in the next few days. What I should like to put before the House is that the situation is one which calls, not so much for displays of sentiment, as for action. It is almost inconceivable at this moment, after his success with Russia, that Herr Hitler should go back upon his declared policy with regard to Danzig. It is equally inconceivable that we should go back upon our pledges to Poland. Well, then, ought we not, in all sobriety, to face the grim fact that we are almost certain to be confronted, within a few days it may be, certainly within a few weeks, with the prospect of war? If that is so, then would it not be madness on our part not to take at once every measure that would be required if war were to come, and to take it as a God-send if war should not come?

I hoped to have heard to-day something, both from the Government and from the House, about what we are to do in this situation. I should like to know, among other things, what is being done to rush stores into this country, and, what is more important still, when action is going to be taken about evacuation. Can we afford to delay that a day longer? Again, when are our Reserves to be called up? No menace is involved, when others are calling up Reservists by the million, if we call up our 120,000 or 130,000 Reservists. When are the Territorials to be embodied? Again, what decision have the Government taken—surely they must have come to some decision already—on another matter, that is,

about the extension of universal service—to what age limits and how the thing is to be carried out and dovetailed into the present Militia system

Further—a matter of no small importance—when are the undertakings of those who volunteer for A R P work to be made more definite? I understand that behind the scenes preliminary measures have been taken for a National Register. Surely every day it can be put in hand before the bombs begin to fall and communications get interrupted ought to be taken advantage of. There are many other things.

There is only one other thing that I would add and that is this. Our experience in the last war showed conclusively that a Cabinet of 20 or more members is not an instrument of government that can carry on a war. We must have a War Cabinet of half a dozen members free from all departmental work able to meet day by day sitting a good many hours every day, that can get decisions thought out and executed and provide that link between the Prime Minister and the administrative Departments that makes for efficiency and for action. I should have thought that here again it was not necessary to wait for the bombs actually to fall upon London before we provided ourselves with an instrument of government that could conduct a war.

We have never stood in graver danger than we stand to day. It may be that a show of firmness of action might yet influence, if not Herr Hitler possibly Italy. I doubt it. I believe the mind of the dictators to day is that they have more than a good chance of crushing us that all the odds are in their favour and that they are prepared to risk it. Therefore the only thing we can do is to face up to that situation frankly and whole heartedly and take now without a moment's delay the action which is necessary.

Miss WILKINSON I cannot enter into this general atmosphere of forgive and forget as regards the present Prime Minister. I do not believe that any criticism of the Prime Minister or his policy that is made in this House will in any way encourage Herr Hitler to think that this nation is not united. If the Prime Minister will forgive me for saying so I think this nation would be much more united if he were not the Prime Minister. I for one should find it extremely difficult to be united with those behind him. We all admit the sincerity and high purpose of the Prime Minister but what in fact did he do? When he came into office as he made it perfectly clear he made it his business to torpedo the system of collective security and refuse to pay the premiums that collective security under the League of Nations meant. That has been so from the moment he made his Midsummer madness speech about sanctions until to-day or rather until the situation became so terrible that even he realised the utter bankruptcy of that policy. His policy has been to say that we cannot pay the premiums for collective security. I do not want to say, We told you so when a man is facing such an utter

collapse of his policy as the Prime Minister is facing to day, but we have to realise that that is the fact

The Prime Minister said We will not have this ideological grouping Very well he has seen what Herr Hitler calls potentially the greatest war force in the world swing over probably to the other side—we do not as yet know for certain I suggest that it is about time that we got to an ideological grouping Men will not fight for the Bank of England Montagu Norman and the City of London but they will fight for something they consider is supremely worth fighting for The greatest crime of the Prime Minister of this country is that never once has he really managed to rise to the point of giving the country something worth fighting for His speeches about liberty and democracy have paid lip service to something which his actions have belied in Spain and in Czechoslovakia

If there is to be a war which God grant there shall not be it can come only if we say to the people of the world that we are prepared to lead them in a real fight for liberty social justice and the things for which men care I warn the Prime Minister that if he gets his emergency powers and tries to use them against the railwaymen and the working people of this country he will split the democratic forces As a matter now of national safety we have to get above the mere financial and trading interests that will go on selling to Germany until the last minute If those are national interests let us fight—if we have to fight as a result of the Prime Minister's muddling—not for them but for something that is worth fighting for

MR BEVAN The Prime Minister said that he bore a very great share of the responsibility that upon his shoulders rested a heavier burden than upon the shoulders of anybody else I think the guarantee to Poland in the absence of an agreement with Russia was a mistake It was militarily silly It should have followed and not preceded negotiations with Russia The Russian proposal for a four Power pact should have been accepted But I do not accept the statement that the Prime Minister of Great Britain has a heavier burden upon his shoulders than anybody else His is the easiest job in the House of Commons The more blunders he makes the more necessity there is for unity and for no criticism to be heard The bigger the catastrophe of which he is the architect the safer he is This is the same Government its personnel is the same as that which was the architect of Munich The suggestion is that the people of my constituency the colliers steelworkers and railwaymen should offer their bodies as a deterrent to German aggression There is one man over there whom you could offer—offer him Let the Conservative party if it wants to convince us that it is in earnest, call a Carlton Club meeting and get rid of the Prime Minister He is the man upon whom Hitler relies he is the man responsible for this situation [AN HON. MEMBER Be British] Yes talk to us about being British you Francophiles There is

a brigadier-general sitting there who, in this House, got up to defend over and over again the Government's policy in Spain, which will throw away hundreds of thousands of British lives; and you people over there dare to ask for unity. It is monstrous.

The argument is that the Prime Minister ought to have spoken, that the Leader of the Opposition and the Leader of the Liberal party should have spoken, and that the House of Commons should then have passed the Bill through all its stages, in order to present the maximum deterrent to any aggression against Poland. Why do we not have some sacrifices from that side of the House? Why do you not reconstruct your own Government, and get rid of the people whose presence in the Government is weakening Great Britain's reputation abroad? If there is one way in which you young fellows on the Front Bench there—

MR. SPEAKER: Perhaps the hon. Member will address his remarks to me.

MR. BEVAN: I am sorry, Mr. Speaker, if I have offended against Parliamentary etiquette. The one way in which these young hon. Members can do their duty is to say that they are no longer going to remain in the team led by three or four people whose policy may plunge Europe into war in a few weeks and may result in the sacrifice of all our young people. That is why I say that no job is easier than that of the Prime Minister. No Opposition could be kinder. It has prophesied this every month for four or five years. It has fought against it at every stage of the journey and, at the end of it, abstains even from saying to the Prime Minister, "I told you so." It is not for the sake of saying "I told you so," that I am making this statement this afternoon, but because I believe that the most effective way in which Germany and Italy can be persuaded that the resolution of this country is united behind its obligations is to get rid of the assassins of democracy in so many parts of Europe.

CHAPTER TWO

THE HOUSE OF COMMONS GOES TO WAR

The hope that peace might be saved faded rapidly as August drew to a close. On 1st September the Prime Minister reported that German troops had crossed the Polish frontier and begun bombing

open towns. The German Government was given a last chance to suspend their aggressive action, and Parliament rapidly enacted a heavy list of emergency powers. Many members of the House of Commons found the delay in announcing the Allies' decision almost too painful and bewildering to be endured. On 3rd September the House learnt that the die had been cast and the British and French Empires were at war with Germany.

29th August, 1939.

THE PRIME MINISTER (MR. CHAMBERLAIN): Since the House met on Thursday last there has been little change in the main features of the situation. The catastrophe, as I said then, is not yet on us, but I cannot say that the danger of it has yet in any way receded. . . .

I should be glad if I could disclose to the House the fullest information as to the contents of the communications exchanged with Herr Hitler. I am, however, able to indicate in quite general terms some of the main points with which they deal. Herr Hitler was concerned to impress upon His Majesty's Government his wish for an Anglo-German understanding of a complete and lasting character. On the other hand, he left His Majesty's Government in no doubt of his views as to the urgency of settling the German-Polish question. His Majesty's Government have also frequently expressed their desire to see the realisation of such an Anglo-German understanding, and as soon as circumstances permit they would naturally welcome an opportunity of discussing with Germany the several issues a settlement of which would have to find a place in any permanent agreement. But everything turns upon the manner in which the immediate differences between Germany and Poland can be handled and the nature of the proposals which might be made for any settlement. We have made it plain that our obligations to Poland, cast into formal shape by the agreement which was signed on 25th August, on Friday last, will be carried out. The House will remember that the Government have said more than once, publicly, that the German-Polish differences should be capable of solution by peaceful means. . . .

The House might like to hear one or two particulars of the preparations which have been made. Obviously, there are many things which I cannot very well say here because they could not be confined to those whom I see before me. My statement must, therefore, be in very general terms. Some of the measures which we had to take, such as those in connection with requisitioning, necessarily must cause some degree of inconvenience to the public. I am confident that the people of the country generally recognise that the nation's needs must now be paramount and that they will submit willingly, and even cheerfully, to any inconvenience or hardships that may be involved. At any rate, we have not had to begin here by issuing rationing cards. To deal

first with the active defence of the country, the Air Defence of Great Britain has been placed in a state of instant readiness. The ground anti-aircraft defences have been deployed and they are manned by Territorial anti-aircraft units. The regular squadrons of the Royal Air Force have been brought up to war strength by the addition of the necessary reservists, including a portion of the Volunteer Reserve. The fighter and general squadrons of the Auxiliary Air Force have been called up and are standing ready and the balloon barrage is in position. The Observer Corps are at their posts, and, indeed, the whole system is ready night and day to be brought into instant operation. The coast defences are ready and are manned by the coast units of the Territorial Army. Arrangements have also been made for the protection by the National Defence Companies, by Militia and by units of the Territorial Army of a very large number of important points whose safety is essential for the national war effort.

As to the Navy, the House will remember that in July last it was announced that the Reserve Fleet would be called up at the beginning of August in order to take part in combined land and Air exercises. For that purpose a number of reservists were called up under the provisions of the Reserves and Auxiliary Forces Act. As a result, the Navy was in an advanced state of preparedness when the present crisis arose, and the whole of our fighting Fleet is now ready at a moment's notice to take up any dispositions which would be necessary in war. A number of other measures have been taken during the past week to improve the state of our naval preparedness. I need not go into all the details, but the naval officers in charge of the various ports have been appointed and have taken up their duties, the naval ports and bases have been put into an advanced state of preparedness. As hon. Members will be aware, the Admiralty has also assumed control of merchant shipping acting under the powers conferred by the Emergency Powers Act, and instructions have already been issued to merchant shipping on various routes. A considerable number of movements have been carried out of units of the armed land forces both at home and overseas. These movements are part of pre-arranged plans which provide that in order to ensure a greater state of readiness a number of units should, if possible, move to their war stations before the outbreak of war. The Civil Defence regional organisation has been placed on war footing. Regional commissioners and their staffs are at their war stations.

The main responsibility for the organisation of Civil Defence measures generally rests with the local authorities. Instructions have been sent to the local authorities to complete all the preparatory steps so that action can be taken at the shortest notice. Plans for the evacuation of school children, mothers and young children, expectant mothers and blind persons from certain congested areas—plans which have involved an immense amount of detailed

thinking—are ready. Those who have to carry out those plans have been recalled for duty, school teachers in evacuation areas have been kept in easy reach of school assembly points since Saturday, and a rehearsal of the arrangements for evacuating school children was carried out yesterday. Nearly a week ago local authorities were warned to make arrangements for the extinction of public lighting and to prepare the necessary aids to movement when the lighting has been extinguished. Arrangements have been completed for calling up at very short notice the personnel of the Air Raid Precautions Service, and duty officers are available throughout the 24 hours at key posts. The last item I mention is that the necessary preliminary steps have been taken to prepare hospitals for the reception of casualties.

The instances I have given to the House are merely illustrations of the general state of readiness, of which the House and the country are aware. I think that they justify and partly account for the general absence of fear, or, indeed, of any violent emotion. The British people are said sometimes to be slow to make up their minds, but, having made them up, they do not readily let go. The issue of peace or war is still undecided and we will still hope, and still will work, for peace, but we will abate no jot of our resolution to hold fast to the line which we have laid down for ourselves.

MR ARTHUR GREENWOOD We meet again to day to hear a statement on the changing international scene. This is not a day the value of which can be counted by the number of words that are uttered, but by the pregnancy of the meaning of the words that are uttered, and, though the international scene may change kaleidoscopically, whatever else may change my party's inflexible determination to defend liberty, to uphold the rule of law against the arbitrary use of force, still remains. In the most emphatic words I wish to say that, so far as we are concerned, aggression must cease now. Poland will not be allowed to follow to the grave those nations that were martyred by the aggressors. Our determination once and for all is that threats, menaces and open aggression shall come to an end. What I said last week I stand by to day in the name of my party. Our spirit has not weakened, our spirit has deepened. On this issue we are adamant and immovable, and he who to-day, whether on those benches opposite or outside in this country or abroad, would dishonour the pledges which have been given, endorsed, re-endorsed and endorsed again, would be a traitor to the peace and freedom of the world.

The door is still ajar. The Prime Minister has told us that a further reply may be expected from the German Chancellor. I hope the door will remain ajar until it closes with the angel of death and the monster of aggression outside the threshold for ever. No nation in Europe—no nation in Europe—will make war except one—[An HON. MEMBER: "Name it!"]—no nation in Europe, and therefore, there will be no war unless Herr Hitler wills it.

It has been since the end of the last Great War the unwavering policy of my party to build up permanent peace, and, if the present situation can be resolved, a new chapter in world history will have been opened; and perhaps the mental agonies through which we have been passing will have been worth while if we have learned their lessons. In that event Labour will make its constructive proposals for the permanent preservation of peace and freedom. I was glad that the right hon. Gentleman has told us, and told the world, that we are not unprepared. I am grateful for that statement. I think it is as well that our own people should know, I think it is as well that those nations in Europe which might be involved should also know, that while we strive for peace we are leaving no stone unturned to meet the situation should the fateful blow fall.

I have said that I did not think that length of speech was an asset upon an occasion of this kind, and I hope to set an example of that nature, as I have said on previous occasions. I end, therefore, with two sentences. It is everybody's desire that the negotiations which are now proceeding should be successful on the lines of justice and honour. Should they fail, those who have created a new situation will meet with an irresistible, iron determination in this country to end aggression for ever.

SIR ARCHIBALD SINCLAIR: On the main issue of the Debate, let me say with what pleasure my hon. Friends and I have listened to the Prime Minister's assurance that His Majesty's Government are standing firm in the support of, and in the discharge of their obligations to, Poland at this critical time. We cannot go on from one September to another, always with a new crisis over some fresh series of demands. This must be stopped. Let me say, too, that my hon. Friends and I are equally grateful to hear the Prime Minister say that every possibility, within the framework of that determination, of a peaceful solution, is being sought. In that way Britain finds herself in harmony with world opinion in the search for a peaceful solution of world problems. I do not think I am misinterpreting the Prime Minister's view when I say that his undertaking to co-operate as closely as possible with Parliament means that he will take every opportunity of giving to the people of this country and the Press the greatest possible amount of information so as to relieve the inevitable strain upon the patience of the public in these anxious and difficult times.

1st September, 1939.

THE PRIME MINISTER (MR. CHAMBERLAIN): I do not propose to say many words to-night. The time has come when action rather than speech is required. Eighteen months ago in this House I prayed that the responsibility might not fall upon me

to ask this country to accept the awful arbitrament of war. I fear that I may not be able to avoid that responsibility. But at any rate I cannot wish for conditions in which such a burden should fall upon me in which I should feel clearer than I do to day as to where my duty lies. No man can say that the Government could have done more to try to keep open the way for an honourable and equitable settlement of the dispute between Germany and Poland. Nor have we neglected any means of making it crystal clear to the German Government that if they insisted on using force again in the manner in which they have used it in the past we were resolved to oppose them by force. Now that all the relevant documents are being made public we shall stand at the bar of history knowing that the responsibility for this terrible catastrophe lies on the shoulders of one man—the German Chancellor who has not hesitated to plunge the world into misery in order to serve his own senseless ambitions.

Our object has been to try and bring about discussions of the Polish German dispute between the two countries themselves on terms of equality the settlement to be one which safeguarded the independence of Poland and of which the due observance would be secured by international guarantees. There is just one passage from a recent communication which was dated 30th August which I should like to quote because it shows how easily the final clash might have been avoided had there been the least desire on the part of the German Government to arrive at a peaceful settlement. In this document we said

His Majesty's Government fully recognise the need for speed in the initiation of discussions and they share the apprehensions of the Chancellor arising from the proximity of two mobilised armies standing face to face. They would accordingly most strongly urge that both parties should undertake that during the negotiations no aggressive military movements should take place. His Majesty's Government feel confident that they could obtain such an undertaking from the Polish Government if the German Government would give similar assurances.

That telegram which was repeated to Poland brought an instantaneous reply from the Polish Government dated 31st August, in which they said

The Polish Government are also prepared on a reciprocal basis to give a formal guarantee in the event of negotiations taking place that Polish troops will not violate the frontiers of the German Reich provided a corresponding guarantee is given regarding the non violation of the frontiers of Poland by troops of the German Reich.

We never had any reply from the German Government to that suggestion one which if it had been followed might have saved the catastrophe which took place this morning. In the German

broadcast last night, which recited the 16 points of the . . . which they have put forward, there occurred this sentence:

"In these circumstances the Reich Government considers its proposals rejected"

I must examine that statement. I must tell the House what are the circumstances. To begin with let me say that the text of these proposals has never been communicated by Germany to Poland at all. The history of the matter is this. On Tuesday, 29th August, in replying to a Note which we sent to them, the German Government said, among other things, that they would immediately draw up proposals for a solution acceptable to themselves and

"will, if possible, place these at the disposal of the British Government before the arrival of the Polish negotiator."

It will be seen by examination of the White Paper that the German Government had stated that they counted upon the arrival of a plenipotentiary from Poland in Berlin on the 30th, that is to say, on the following day. In the meantime, of course, we were awaiting these proposals. The next evening, when our Ambassador saw Herr von Ribbentrop, the German Foreign Secretary, he urged upon the latter that when these proposals were ready—for we had heard no more about them—he should invite the Polish Ambassador to call and should hand him the proposals for transmission to his Government. Thereupon, reports our Ambassador, in the most violent terms Herr von Ribbentrop said he would never ask the Ambassador to visit him. He hinted that if the Polish Ambassador asked him for an interview it might be different.

The House will see that this was on Wednesday night, which, according to the German statement of last night, is now claimed to be the final date after which no negotiation with Poland was acceptable. It is plain, therefore, that Germany claims to treat Poland as in the wrong because she had not by Wednesday night entered upon discussions with Germany about a set of proposals of which she had never heard.

Now what of ourselves? On that Wednesday night, at the interview to which I have just referred, Herr von Ribbentrop produced a lengthy document which he read out in German, aloud, at top speed. Naturally, after this reading our Ambassador asked for a copy of the document, but the reply was that it was now too late, as the Polish representative had not arrived in Berlin by midnight. And, so, Sir, we never got a copy of those proposals, and the first time we heard them—we heard them—was on the broadcast last night. Well, Sir, those are the circumstances in which the German Government said that they would consider that their proposals were rejected. Is it not clear that their conception of a negotiation was that on almost instantaneous demand a Polish plenipotentiary should go to Berlin—where others had been before him—and should there receive a statement of demands to be accepted in their entirety or refused? I am not pronouncing any opinion upon the terms themselves, for I do not feel called upon

to do so. The proper course in our view—in the view of all of us—was that these proposals should have been put before the Poles who should have been given time to consider them and to say whether, in their opinion they did or did not infringe those vital interests of Poland which Germany had assured us on a previous occasion she intended to respect. Only last night the Polish Ambassador did see the German Foreign Secretary Herr von Ribbentrop. Once again he expressed to him what, indeed the Polish Government had already said publicly that they were willing to negotiate with Germany about their disputes on an equal basis. What was the reply of the German Government? The reply was that without another word the German troops crossed the Polish frontier this morning at dawn and are since reported to be bombing open towns. In these circumstances there is only one course open to us. His Majesty's Ambassador in Berlin and the French Ambassador have been instructed to hand to the German Government the following document:

Early this morning the German Chancellor issued a proclamation to the German Army which indicated clearly that he was about to attack Poland. Information which has reached His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom and the French Government indicates that German troops have crossed the Polish frontier and that attacks upon Polish towns are proceeding. In these circumstances it appears to the Governments of the United Kingdom and of France that by their action the German Government have created conditions namely an aggressive act of force against Poland threatening the independence of Poland which call for the implementation by the Governments of the United Kingdom and of France of the undertaking to Poland to come to her assistance. I am accordingly to inform your Excellency that unless the German Government are prepared to give His Majesty's Government satisfactory assurances that the German Government have suspended all aggressive action against Poland and are prepared promptly to withdraw their forces from Polish territory His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom will without hesitation fulfil their obligations to Poland.

AN HON. MEMBER. [Time limit?] If a reply to this last warning is unfavourable and I do not suggest that it is likely to be otherwise His Majesty's Ambassador is instructed to ask for our passports. In that case we are ready. Yesterday we took further steps towards the completion of our defensive preparations. This morning we ordered complete mobilisation of the whole of the Royal Navy, Army and Royal Air Force. We have also taken a number of other measures both at home and abroad which the House will not perhaps expect me to specify in detail. Briefly they represent the final steps in accordance with pre-arranged plans. These last can be put into force rapidly and are of such a nature that they can be deferred until war seems inevitable. Steps have also been taken under the powers conferred by the House last week to safeguard the position in regard to stocks of commodities of various kinds.

The thoughts of many of us must at this moment be turning back to 1914, and to a comparison of our position with that which existed then. How do we stand this time? The answer is that all three Services are ready, and that the situation in all directions is far more favourable and reassuring than in 1914, while behind the fighting Services we have built up a vast organisation of Civil Defence under our scheme of Air-Raid Precautions. As regards the immediate man-power requirements, the Royal Navy, the Army and the Royal Air Force are in the position of having almost as many men as they can conveniently handle at this moment. There are, however, certain categories of service in which men are immediately required both for Military and Civil Defence. These will be announced in detail through the Press and the B.B.C. The main and most satisfactory point to observe is that there is to-day no need to make an appeal in a general way for recruits such as was issued by Lord Kitchener 25 years ago. That appeal has been anticipated by many months, and the men are already available.

So much for the immediate present. Now we must look to the future. It is essential in the face of the tremendous task which confronts us, more especially in view of our past experiences in this matter, to organise our man-power this time upon a methodical, equitable and economical basis as possible. We therefore, propose immediately to introduce legislation directed to that end. A Bill will be laid before you which for all practical purposes will amount to an expansion of the Military Training Act. Under its operation all fit men between the age of 18 and 41 will be rendered liable to military service if and when called upon. It is not intended at the outset that any considerable number of men other than those already liable shall be called up, and steps will be taken to ensure that the man-power essentially required by industry shall not be taken away.

There is one other allusion which I should like to make before I end my speech, and that is to record my satisfaction, and the satisfaction of His Majesty's Government, that throughout these last days of crisis Signor Mussolini also has been doing his best to reach a solution.

It now only remains for us to set our teeth and to enter upon this struggle, which we ourselves earnestly endeavoured to avoid, with determination to see it through to the end. We shall enter it with a clear conscience, with the support of the Dominions and the British Empire, and the moral approval of the greater part of the world. We have no quarrel with the German people, except that they allow themselves to be governed by a Nazi Government. As long as that Government exists and pursues the methods it has so persistently followed during the last two years, there will be no peace in Europe. We shall merely pass from one crisis to another, and see one country after another attacked by methods which have now become familiar to us in their sickening technique. We are resolved that these methods

must come to an end. If out of the struggle we again re-establish in the world the rules of good faith and the renunciation of force, why, then even the sacrifices that will be entailed upon us will find their fullest justification.

MR. ARTHUR GREENWOOD: This is the turning point in human history, and we are now facing a situation which, in the history of mankind, has never been faced before in this country. The die is cast. It has been my privilege and my very heavy responsibility to act, on the last two occasions this House has met, as spokesman for my party and the movement which I represent. On both occasions I endeavoured to put clearly and briefly the attitude which we, as a party, have taken. I epitomised the very solemn declarations made by British Labour in recent years. What I then said still holds. I withdraw nothing as to our criticisms of Government policy in the past, and our views as to the heavy responsibility which lies upon them as factors in creating the present situation; but to-day that is past history. We are facing a new situation, and on the two occasions on which I have addressed the House I put our constructive attitude. I now reaffirm, and say, for the third time in this House during the present crisis, that British Labour stands by its pledged word. We shall, at whatever cost, in the interests of the liberty of the world in the future, use all our resources to defend ourselves and others against aggression.

The right hon. Gentleman appears to have left another loop-hole. His communication gives the German Government an opportunity of withdrawal. There can now be no withdrawal, and in any event this nation is in honour bound. I would read Article I of the Anglo-Polish Treaty, an Article which bears only one meaning. It reads:

"Should one of the contracting Powers become engaged in hostilities with a European Power in consequence of aggression by the latter against that contracting party, the other contracting party will, at once—"

at once—

"give the contracting party engaged in hostilities all the support and assistance in its power."

The Prime Minister's words have been firm. He has uttered words from which he cannot, and I am sure he would not wish to, escape, but we are building our hopes upon sand, if we think that the German Government are going to give any kind of favourable response to the appeal which has been made. The act of aggression has already taken place. Herr Hitler has put himself grievously in the wrong. He has become the arch-enemy of mankind. He has been guilty not merely of the gravest, basest treachery to this Government and this people; he has been guilty of the basest treachery to all peoples to whom in the past he has given promises. The right hon. Gentleman quoted almost the exact words which

I used in the House on Tuesday. I said that the issue of peace and war rested in the hands of one man. I am glad that the right hon. Gentleman has to-night put it equally emphatically.

The party to which I belong, which may have faults but which can never be accused of cowardice, will issue its statement to-night to this country and to the world on the view it takes. That view, I think, is the view which I have expressed on previous occasions. I quote just one sentence:

"The British Labour Movement therefore calls upon all its members to stand solidly behind it in resistance to aggression."

From that attitude we shall never depart. We shall enter the struggle without passion against people. I was glad when the Prime Minister used words which we had used in our official declaration. We have no quarrel with the German people; but while we have no passion against people we shall enter this struggle with a grim determination to overthrow and destroy that system of government which has trampled on freedom and . . . men and women—many of them friends of my own—and which has brought the world back to the jackboot of the old Prussianism. In the process of this struggle there will be far-reaching and economic changes which at the moment no man can . . . but out of the smoking ruins of the struggle will arise a new order of society. Once the gunfire ceases and the roll of the drums dies away, after the greatest price mankind in all its . . . has ever paid to learn its lesson, dictatorship will have been destroyed for ever and organised labour here, and elsewhere in other lands besides ourselves, will play its part in building a world from which war will be banished and in which a new . . . will be established.

There is a view among those who are now our enemies that might is right. I believe that right is might. I believe that long last right must win, whether it be internationally or whether it be nationally. There is in the human spirit something which may be tortured and which may be temporarily suppressed but which can never be destroyed, and that is its determination to keep alive and keep fully aflame the lamp of liberty. My last words are these: I look forward, as we all do, with a very sad heart and with a sorrow that none of us can express, regarding the sufferings which must fall upon hundreds of millions of people, but, however great the suffering, however poignant the agony and whatever the sacrifice may be, I know in my heart that freedom and mankind's hope for the future cannot be quenched. I know that liberty will prevail.

SIR ARCHIBALD SINCLAIR: . . . Now, vigorous action must be taken by us, in conjunction with our Allies, to sustain the common cause of freedom. It is essential, therefore, that ample powers should be given to the Government, and therefore my hon. Friends and I will support the Bills which have been introduced into the House to-day. It is also essential that an instru-

ment of government should be created, free enough from the routine work of administration to plan ahead and strong enough to act vigorously and swiftly. It is necessary that we should make the best use of those great resources of man-power and material which we have at our disposal. While it was in one respect gratifying that the Prime Minister was able to tell us that there were so many men volunteering that the fighting Services had as many as they could at the present time handle, it is very important that those fighting Services should be themselves in a position to handle increasing numbers as quickly as possible. Hence, the necessity for a War Cabinet.

Let us, too, in this solemn moment, set the goal of our endeavour clearly before us: not the aggrandisement of our country and Empire, not merely the defeat of Nazi tyranny. Tyranny has been defeated before, aggression has been defeated before, dictatorship has been defeated before, and it has sprung up again. Let us keep before us the necessity for constructive effort, for the creation in Europe of that new order which, before the emergence of National Socialism in Germany, we were beginning slowly, with many setbacks, but on the whole not unsuccessfully, to build, an order based not on the sanctions of power politics but on the moral law, in which freedom, justice and equality of economic opportunity will be guaranteed to nations great and small alike.

2nd September, 1939.

THE PRIME MINISTER (MR CHAMBERLAIN).—Sir Neville Henderson was received by Herr von Ribbentrop at half-past nine last night, and he delivered the warning message which was read to the House yesterday. Herr von Ribbentrop replied that he must submit the communication to the German Chancellor. Our Ambassador declared his readiness to receive the Chancellor's reply. Up to the present no reply has been received.

It may be that the delay is caused by consideration of a proposal which, meanwhile, had been put forward by the Italian Government, that hostilities should cease and that there should then immediately be a conference between the Five Powers, Great Britain, France, Poland, Germany and Italy. While appreciating the efforts of the Italian Government, His Majesty's Government, for their part, would find it impossible to take part in a conference while Poland is being subjected to invasion, her towns are under bombardment and Danzig is being made the subject of a unilateral settlement by force. His Majesty's Government will, as stated yesterday, be bound to take action unless the German forces are withdrawn from Polish territory. They are in communication with the French Government as to the limit of time within which it would be necessary for the British and French Governments to know whether the German Government were prepared to effect such a withdrawal. If the German Government should agree to withdraw

their forces then His Majesty's Government would be willing to regard the position as being the same as it was before the German forces crossed the Polish frontier. That is to say, the way would be open to discussion between the German and Polish Governments on the matters at issue between them, on the understanding that the settlement arrived at was one that safeguarded the vital interests of Poland and was secured by an international guarantee. If the German and Polish Governments wished that other Powers should be associated with them in the discussion, His Majesty's Government for their part would be willing to agree.

There is one other matter to which allusion should be made in order that the present situation may be perfectly clear. Yesterday Herr Förster who, on 23rd August, had, in contravention of the Danzig constitution, become the head of the State, decreed the incorporation of Danzig in the Reich and the dissolution of the constitution. Herr Hitler was asked to give effect to this decree by German law. At a meeting of the Reichstag yesterday morning, a law was passed for the reunion of Danzig with the Reich. The international status of Danzig as a Free City is established by a treaty of which His Majesty's Government are a signatory, and the Free City was placed under the protection of the League of Nations. The rights given to Poland in Danzig by treaty are defined and confirmed by agreement concluded between Danzig and Poland. The action taken by the Danzig authorities and the Reichstag yesterday is the final step in the unilateral repudiation of these international instruments, which could only be modified by negotiation. His Majesty's Government do not, therefore, recognise either the validity of the grounds on which the action of the Danzig authorities was based, the validity of this action itself, or of the effect given to it by the German Government.

MR. GREENWOOD: This is indeed a grave moment. I believe the whole House is perturbed by the right hon. Gentleman's statement. There is a growing feeling, I believe, in all quarters of the House that this incessant strain must end sooner or later—and, in a sense, the sooner the better. But if we are to march, I hope we shall march in complete unity, and march with France.

MR. MCGOVERN: You people do not intend to march—not one of you.

MR. GREENWOOD: I am speaking under very difficult circumstances with no opportunity to think about what I should say; and I speak what is in my heart at this moment. I am gravely disturbed. An act of aggression took place 38 hours ago. The moment that act of aggression took place one of the most important treaties of modern times automatically came into operation. There may be reasons why instant action was not taken. I am not pre-

pared to say—and I have tried to play a straight game—I am not prepared to say what I would have done had I been one of those sitting on those Benches. That delay might have been justifiable, but there are many of us on all sides of this House who view with the gravest concern the fact that hours went by and news came in of bombing operations and news to-day of an intensification of it and I wonder how long we are prepared to vacillate at a time when Britain and all that Britain stands for and human civilisation are in peril. We must march with the French. I hope these words of mine may go further. I do not believe that the French dare at this juncture go or would dream at this juncture of going back on the sacred oaths that they have taken. It is not for me to rouse any kind of suspicion—and I would never dream of doing so at this time—but if as the right hon. Gentleman has told us deeply though I regret it we must wait upon our Allies, I should have preferred the Prime Minister to have been able to say to night definitely. It is either peace or war.

To-morrow we meet at 12. I hope the Prime Minister then—well, he must be in a position to make some further statement—[HON. MEMBERS: Definite.]—And I must put this point to him. Every minute's delay now means the loss of life imperilling our national interests—

MR. BOOTHBY: Honour

MR. GREENWOOD: Let me finish my sentence. I was about to say imperilling the very foundations of our national honour and I hope therefore that to-morrow morning however hard it may be to the right hon. Gentleman—and no one would care to be in his shoes to night—we shall know the mind of the British Government and that there shall be no more devices for dragging out what has been dragged out too long. The moment we look like weakening at that moment dictatorship knows we are beaten. We are not beaten. We shall not be beaten. We cannot be beaten—but delay is dangerous and I hope the Prime Minister—it is very difficult to press him too hard at this stage—will be able to tell us when the House meets at noon to-morrow what the final decision is and whether then our promises are in process of fulfilment for in my mind there can be no escape now from the dilemma into which we have been placed. I cannot see Herr Hitler in honesty making any deal which he will not be prepared to betray. Therefore thinking very hurriedly in these few moments I believe that the die is cast and we want to know in time.

SIR ARCHIBALD SINCLAIR: This meeting will not have been held in vain if it demonstrates to the world that the British Parliament will not tolerate delay in the fulfilment of our honourable obligations to Poland. The Prime Minister in his statement said that we have received no reply from the German Government

to our Note and that the delay in sending us a reply might have been caused by consideration of the Italian proposal for a conference. Consideration of that proposal has at any rate caused no delay in the advance of the Germany Army, and I am sure that Parliament feels that a reply must be demanded unless the advance of those armies is promptly stopped.

THE PRIME MINISTER I think the House recognises that the Government is in a somewhat difficult position. I suppose it always must be a difficulty for allies who have to communicate with one another by telephone to synchronise their thoughts and actions as quickly as those who are in the same room, but I should be horrified if the House thought for one moment that the statement that I have made to them betrayed the slightest weakening either of this Government or of the French Government in the attitude which we have already taken up. I am bound to say that I myself share the distrust which the right hon. Gentlemen expressed of manœuvres of this kind. I should have been very glad had it been possible for me to say to the House now that the French Government and ourselves were agreed to make the shortest possible limit to the time when action should be taken by both of us.

It is very possible that the communications which we have had with the French Government will receive a reply from them in the course of the next few hours. I understand that the French Cabinet is in session at this moment and I feel certain that I can make a statement to the House of a definite character to-morrow when the House meets again. I am the last man to neglect any opportunity which I consider affords a serious chance of avoiding the great catastrophe of war even at the last moment, but I confess that in the present case I should have to be convinced of the good faith of the other side in any action which they took before I could regard the proposition which has been made as one to which we could expect a reasonable chance of a successful issue. I anticipate that there is only one answer I shall be able to give to the House to-morrow. I hope that the issue will be brought to a close at the earliest possible moment so that we may know where we are and I trust that the House, realising the position which I have tried to put before it, will believe me that I speak in complete good faith and will not prolong the discussion which perhaps, might make our position more embarrassing than it is.

3rd September 1939

THE PRIME MINISTER (Mr CHAMBERLAIN) When I spoke last night to the House I could not but be aware that in some parts of the House there were doubts and some bewilderment as to whether there had been any weakening, hesitation or vacillation on the part of His Majesty's Government. In the circumstances, I make no reproach for if I had been in the same

position as hon Members not sitting on this Bench and not in possession of all the information which we have I should very likely have felt the same. The statement which I have to make this morning will show that there were no grounds for doubt. We were in consultation all day yesterday with the French Government and we felt that the intensified action which the Germans were taking against Poland allowed no delay in making our own position clear. Accordingly we decided to send to our Ambassador in Berlin instructions which he was to hand at nine o'clock this morning to the German Foreign Secretary and which read as follows:

* Sir

In the communication which I had the honour to make to you on 1st September, I informed you on the instructions of His Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs that unless the German Government were prepared to give His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom satisfactory assurances that the German Government had suspended all aggressive action against Poland and were prepared promptly to withdraw their forces from Polish territory His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom would without hesitation, fulfil their obligations to Poland.

Although this communication was made more than 24 hours ago, no reply has been received but German attacks upon Poland have been continued and intensified. I have accordingly the honour to inform you that unless not later than 11 a.m. British Summer time to-day September 3rd satisfactory assurances to the above effect have been given by the German Government and have reached His Majesty's Government in London a state of war will exist between the two countries as from that hour.

That was the final Note. No such undertaking was received by the time stipulated, and, consequently, this country is at war with Germany. I am in a position to inform the House that according to arrangements made between the British and French Governments the French Ambassador in Berlin is at this moment making a similar *démarche* accompanied also by a definite time limit. The House has already been made aware of our plans as I said the other day, we are ready.

This is a sad day for all of us and to none is it sadder than to me. Everything that I have worked for everything that I have hoped for, everything that I have believed in during my public life has crashed into ruins. There is only one thing left for me to do, that is to devote what strength and powers I have to forwarding the victory of the cause for which we have to sacrifice so much. I cannot tell what part I may be allowed to play myself, I trust I may live to see the day when Hitlerism has been destroyed and a liberated Europe has been re-established.

MR ARTHUR GREENWOOD. The atmosphere of this House has changed overnight. Resentment apprehension anger, tinged over our proceedings last night, aroused by a fear that

delays might end in national dishonour and the sacrifice of Polish people to German tyranny. Those feelings, I have to believe, were shared by large numbers of people outside, and from messages which have come to me this morning, I believe that what I said last night met with the approval of our people. This morning we meet in an entirely different atmosphere—one of relief, one of composure, and one of resolution. The intolerable agony of suspense from which all of us have suffered is over; we now know the worst. The hated word "war" has been spoken by Britain, in fulfilment of her pledged word and unbreakable intention to defend Poland and so to defend the liberties of Europe. We have heard more than the word spoken. We have heard the war begin, within the precincts of this House.

I feel that I must, in the name of my hon. Friends—I think I may say in the name of the whole House and of the whole of our people—pay tribute to the great restraint shown by Poland in recent weeks. The last 54 hours have proved that their restraint was not due to cowardice, but to a firm conviction in the righteousness of their cause. For 54 hours Poland has stood alone, at the portals of civilisation, defending us and all free nations, and all that we stand for, and all that we hold dear. She has stood with unexampled bravery, with epic heroism, before her hesitant friends have come to her aid. Poland we greet as a comrade whom we shall not desert. To her we say, "Our hearts are with you, and, with our hearts, all our power, until the angel of peace returns to our midst."

Lastly, in this titanic struggle, unparalleled, I believe, in the history of the world, Nazism must be finally overthrown. The Prime Minister has given us his word that it shall be, and as long as that relentless purpose is pursued with vigour, with foresight, and with determination by the Government, so long will there be a united nation. But should there be confused councils, inefficiency and wavering, then other men must be called to take their places. We share no responsibilities in the tremendous tasks which confront the Government, but we have responsibilities of our own, which we shall not shirk. We have given proof in this Chamber in the past few days that we shall give wholehearted support to the measures necessary to equip this State with the powers that are desired. That support, I pledge this House, will continue. In other directions, according to our opportunities, we shall make our full contribution to the national cause. May the war be swift and sure, and may the peace which follows stand proudly for ever on the shattered ruins of an evil name.

SIR ARCHIBALD SINCLAIR: I feel sure that at this grave moment, having listened to the moving speech of the Prime Minister, we should all wish to pay to him a tribute of sympathy. But we are also in a mood of determination and resolution. The Deputy-Leader of the Opposition referred to the atmosphere of anger and apprehension which reigned in the House yesterday.

To day, as he says the atmosphere has so happily changed. Yet underneath those two phases of the mood of Parliament is our determination to see this thing through.

Let me also if I may in one word pay my tribute to the people of France, who have for so long been making such great preparations for the struggle with which we are now faced. I do not say that in organisation we need yield anything to them. Great advances have been made in our organisation for war, but in individual preparation in the contributions which the men and women of the two countries are making to the common cause I say that France at this moment is ahead of us. If you go to France and meet ten people in the streets you may be sure that eight of them have their places and their parts to play. Our people will do the same as time goes on but let us have no doubt as to the determination with which the French people are facing this crisis. Let me only say in conclusion let the world know that the British people are inexorably determined as the Prime Minister said to end this Nazi domination for ever and to build a world order based on justice and freedom.

MR. CHURCHILL In this solemn hour it is a consolation to recall and to dwell upon our repeated efforts for peace. All have been ill starved, but all have been faithful and sincere. This is of the highest moral value—and not only moral value but practical value—at the present time because the wholehearted concurrence of scores of millions of men and women whose co-operation is indispensable and whose comradeship and brotherhood are indispensable is the only foundation upon which the trial and tribulation of modern war can be endured and surmounted. This moral conviction alone affords that ever fresh resilience which renews the strength and energy of people in long doubtful and dark days. Outside the storms of war may blow and the lands may be lashed with the fury of its gales but in our own hearts this Sunday morning there is peace. Our hands may be active but our consciences are at rest.

We must not underrate the gravity of the task which lies before us or the temerity of the ordeal to which we shall not be found unequal. We must expect many disappointments and many unpleasant surprises but we may be sure that the task which we have freely accepted is one not beyond the compass and the strength of the British Empire and the French Republic. The Prime Minister said it was a sad day and that is indeed true but at the present time there is another note which may be present and that is a feeling of thankfulness that if these great trials were to come upon our Island there is a generation of Britons here ready to prove itself not unworthy of the days of yore and unworthy of those great men the fathers of our land who laid the foundations of our laws and shaped the greatness of our country.

This is not a question of fighting for Danzig or fighting for

Poland. We are fighting to save the whole world from the presence of Nazi tyranny and in defence of all that is most sacred to man. This is no war for domination or imperial "ment or material gain; no war to shut any country out of sunlight and means of progress. It is a war, viewed in its inherent quality, to establish, on impregnable rocks, the rights of the individual, and it is a war to establish and revive the stature of man. Perhaps it might seem a paradox that a war undertaken in the name of liberty and right should require, as a necessary part of its processes, the surrender for the time being of so of the dearly valued liberties and rights. In these last few days the House of Commons has been voting dozens of Bills which hand over to the executive our most dearly valued traditional liberties. We are sure that these liberties will be in hands which will abuse them, which will use them for no class or party interests, which will cherish and guard them, and we look forward to the day, surely and confidently we look forward to the day when our liberties and rights will be restored to us, and when we shall be able to share them with the peoples to whom such blessings unknown.

MR. MCGOVERN: . . . The other thing in my estimation which has driven mankind along the path of war has been the defection of Russia. On Thursday, when I heard of the mobilisation of Russia on the rear of the Polish army I saw in that action one of three courses, first, in conjunction with Hitler, to blackmail the Poles into surrender and submission to his aims, or, second, that they intended to maintain neutrality but to hold a part of the Polish army in order to aid Hitler, or, third, that along with Germany, they intended eventually to assist in the tearing apart of Poland for their own aims and their own use. If there have been any doubts in the mind of Hitler in going to war, the Soviet Government have the criminal responsibility of dissipating those views—[Interruption]—I intend to leave it at that, and to maintain my point of view in this country in spite of the taunts of any person either in this House or outside.

I sympathise this morning with the millions of workers in every country that is going to be involved—to mothers and fathers and sons in Germany, in France, in Austria, in Poland and in Britain and the possessions overseas. My heart goes out to every human being who will be affected by this tragedy, the magnitude of which no man can conceive and the end no man can foretell. In these circumstances I regret that I cannot go along the road of public opinion. Public opinion is undoubtedly behind the Government. It has, by propaganda and by the actions of Hitler himself, been put behind the Government. That public opinion today is strong. As I may say so, united, even if it is against my own desires and point of view, but in the tragedy that will follow in six months' time, that opinion will not be so determined, so united or so strong. I am prepared at this stage to say to the

Government that theirs is the task and the nation is behind them. But every man and woman who believes that it is his duty or her duty to support the Government, if they are honest and honourable in their intentions—I have no attack to make—every person who is of military age and believes in giving service that others should give I hope they will also give it themselves. For my part I regret that, after 2,000 years of the Gospel of the Prince of Peace, mankind, on Sunday morning, finds itself in this position, that men are on the eve of having to live like beasts, with lice and vermin crawling over them, grubbing for food, blinding and tearing bodies apart and blowing limbs asunder, and I say that in my estimation that is not going to solve any problem. That great human tragedy, that brutality, that fiendish cruelty that will be enacted on the fields of war is to be deplored and to be condemned, and do not let passions be roused to the extent that they are going to imagine that it will solve anything.

I look for a world of peace wherein Hitlerism can be eliminated, but the people who can pull Hitler down are the people in Germany, and Hitlerism is not confined to the frontiers of Germany. Hitlerism is to be found in every country in the world, in the dealings of man with man and of groups of men with groups of men. My concluding words are these. I cannot support this country in this catastrophe. I do not regard it as being idealistic. I do not regard it as being for freedom, justice and human right. I regard it on both sides, the one who says "stop" and the other who says "go," as a hard, soulless, grinding materialist struggle for human gain, for the protection of selfish interests, and in that we will have no heart or part, but we hope that, at the earliest possible moment, the peoples of the world, in Germany and in other countries, will rise and revolt and overthrow the tyrannies which exist, and will establish the rule of peace and comfort upon earth.

MR LANSBURY: The cause that I and a handful of friends represent is this morning, apparently, going down to ruin, but I think we ought to take heart of courage from the fact that after 2,000 years of war and strife, at last, even those who enter upon this colossal struggle have to admit that in the end force has not settled, and cannot and will not settle anything. I hope that out of this terrible calamity there will arise a real spirit, a spirit that will compel people to give up reliance on force, and that perhaps this time humanity will learn the lesson and refuse in the future to put its trust in poison gas, in the massacre of little children and universal slaughter.

MR LLOYD GEORGE: I am one of those who with hon and right hon Friends on this side of the House, have from time to time challenged the handling of foreign affairs by the Government, but this is a different matter. The Government are now confronted with the latest, but I am afraid not the last, of a series

of acts of brigandage by a very formidable military Power which if they are left unchallenged will undermine the whole foundations of civilisation throughout the world. The Government could do no other than what they have done. I am one out of tens of millions in this country who will back any Government that is in power in fighting this struggle through in however humble a capacity we may be called upon to render service to our country. I have been through this before and there is only one word I want to say about that. We had very bad moments moments when brave men were rather quailing and doubting but the nation was firm right through from beginning to end. One thing that struck me then was that it was in moments of disaster and in some of the worst disasters with which we were confronted in the War that I found the greatest union among all classes the greatest disappearance of discontent and disaffection and of the grabbing for rights and privileges. The nation closed its ranks then. By that means we went through right to the end and after 4½ years terrible years we won a victory for right. We will do it again.

BRIGADIER GENERAL SIR HENRY CROFT. I realise that this is not the time for words and I will only detain the House for a very few minutes but as there has not so far been any right wing supporter of the Government who has uttered any words I should like to say that I believe I am speaking on behalf of those old Tories in the country that from the bottom of our hearts we welcome the speeches and the spirit of the Oppositions in this House and in the country. We feel that to day we are all one brotherhood fighting for our very existence and we pray that that great unity which is going to mean so much to the men who will have to bear the terrible strain of this war will persist because nothing will hearten them more than to know that all the representatives of our great democracy are one in this solemn hour.

Hon. Members know that I have all my life taken a great personal interest in trying to promote unity in the British Empire and I hope that we shall all be heartened with the knowledge that in the great Dominions overseas to day hearts are pulsating for liberty and freedom in precisely the same way as in the old land.

MR GALLACHER. I want to make a statement which I consider necessary and desirable in the situation. I said yesterday that I stand for the speedy and effective defeat of the Nazi regime as a sure way of bringing about hope for a lasting peace for the peoples of the world. In taking that stand I want to declare here with the utmost confidence from experience and from knowledge that I will not come into conflict with the policy of my working class comrades of the Soviet Union. It is not the time to discuss the character of the negotiations which have gone on but it is necessary that I should make such a declaration as

hat—[HOW MEMBERS "Why?]—and make it known that the confidence exists and I am certain that in the events which confront us and in the task which we have undertaken those great forces which have always been for peace will be ready to come to our aid in carrying through that great endeavour

CHAPTER III

THE CHAMBERLAIN GOVERNMENT CONDUCTS THE WAR POLAND AND FINLAND

The first phase of the war puzzled the House of Commons. Nothing seemed to happen. On 13th September, 1939, Mr. Chamberlain reported the first meeting of the Supreme War Council and from time to time he explained to the House the war situation. Meantime the House did all that was asked of it and added constructive criticism where opportunity served.

As the weeks passed a growing uneasiness made itself felt. Was all being done that could be? Were the departments of State efficient? Were such Ministries as those of Information, Economic Warfare, and Supply adequate to their important tasks?

It is impossible in this volume to trace from the Debates either the House of Commons' reception of the Prime Minister's periodical examinations of the war situation or the scope of the House's criticisms and admonitions. Typical instances only can be given. Torn from their setting they can do no more than suggest a background of determination and confidence, increasingly mingled with uncertainty and even anxiety.

On 13th September the Ministry of Information was subjected to heavy criticism, and it was suggested that the Ministry of Supply lacked vigour. A week later railway administration was criticised and measures against profiteering were advocated. More pointed still and more fully substantiated, were the sharp criticisms of the clumsy working, or non working of the rationing system as applied to butter, fish, meat, tea and other foodstuffs.

Early in October, the collapse and partitioning of Poland induced a discussion of our war aims and even an adumbration of peace possibilities. Many Members felt that the House was not at its best on this occasion. They felt too, that early successes in the anti-airmarine campaign did not completely offset the Polish disaster. Subsequent debates did nothing to mitigate the feelings of uneasiness only such brilliant feats as the Navy and the R. A. F. performed from time to time gave the much needed atmosphere of purposive realism.

Extracts from the discussion of the Polish disaster follow

THE PRIME MINISTER (MR. CHAMBERLAIN): In the last week events of great importance have occurred in the field. On 26th September the German Foreign Minister paid a visit to Moscow, and on 28th September the results of this visit were proclaimed. These results were threefold. In the first place, a fourth partition of Poland has been attempted, and an agreement has been signed recognising as final the frontier between Russia and Germany. The line agreed upon was considerably more favourable to Germany than the provisional line of military occupation which had previously been laid down.

In the second place, the German and Soviet Governments have declared that their agreement has finally settled the questions arising out of the collapse of the Polish State and has created a solid foundation for lasting peace in Eastern Europe. In their opinion, the liquidation of the present war between Germany and England and France would be in the interests of all nations. Both Governments, they go on to say, will endeavour to achieve this object as quickly as possible. They assert that, should their efforts prove unsuccessful, England and France will bear the responsibility for the continuation of the war, and they add that the German and Soviet Governments will then consult together as to the measures they will take.

In the third place, an economic agreement between Germany and Russia is foreshadowed, under which Russia will supply raw materials to Germany and Germany will supply industrial goods produced over a lengthy period.

There has been in some quarters a demand that His Majesty's Government should define their attitude in the face of these developments, but I see nothing in what has happened that should lead this country to modify the attitude which it has felt it right

I am satisfied also in France is determined to secure that the rule of violence shall cease and that the word of Governments once pledged must henceforth be kept

MR ATTLEE I welcome the statement made by the Prime Minister with regard to the situation that has arisen through the forcible division of Poland between two great Powers. That fact does not really alter the situation which caused us to enter upon this war and the fact that Poland has been overrun is not different from the fact that almost all Belgium was overrun in the last War or that Serbia was overrun. Belgium rose again. Poland will rise again. The spirit of the Polish people is not defeated. The Prime Minister is right in my view in saying that we must examine carefully every kind of proposal for peace but we must deal with real ties. It is no good saying that there is peace when there is no peace and the mere reversion to a situation of the last year or so would not bring the world back to peace because the fact this war began long before there was any formal declaration of war. We shall require deeds and not merely words before we can get any substantial basis for peace when we look at what has happened previously. I therefore welcome the Prime Minister's statement that this country and France stand where we are because we are standing essentially for a real peace and not a sham peace and for the safety of all peoples and not merely considering only our own people. With that as the Prime Minister said everyone of us would welcome any real possibility of ending this war and no one would wish to prolong it any longer than is absolutely necessary.

SIR A SINCLAIR Let me now revert to a point on which I have spoken before in these Debates—the question of manpower. I would relate my observations to the important War Office statement which appeared in *The Times* this morning according to the communiqués which were published in July it was anticipated that 34 000 recruits would be called up then and 40 000 in September whereas according to the figures which I gave to the House last week which were taken from the public press only 24 000 were actually called up and trained in July and only 18 000 in September.

There is a great deal of talk about a three years' war but it will not be a three years' war if Hitler can help it. If he can manage it he will finish it in six months. It is therefore urgently vital that we should do all in our power to give the utmost support to the French Army which will be bearing the main strain of the struggle during the next six months. We need the troops quickly but they must be well trained and well equipped before they go. There are such troops in India and in our garrisons overseas which could in part be replaced by older men, ex-service men of experience in the last war and by young men who have been enlisted recently by some of our Territorial battalions who could

complete their training under garrison conditions in India and other places overseas. But the War Office will not touch the volunteers. I am receiving many protests from all parts of the country that there are thousands of men who are only too anxious to obtain an opportunity to serve in the armed Forces of the Crown but are denied it at the present time.

MR LLOYD GEORGE If the whole situation with regard to the question of peace were dependent upon the word of Hitler I am afraid that we should have no alternative but to proceed until we got some other and better and more assured guarantee. What I want to put to the Prime Minister is this. Is it clear that the statement issued last week, the combined statement of the Russian and German Governments with regard to the agreement they had arrived at, was only a provisional one? They were not putting forward any terms of peace. It was a proposal which certainly should not contemplate. It was that we should accept as an accomplished fact the conquest of Poland and the absorption or assimilation of Poland and that we should base any terms of peace upon that assumption. We do not agree with that.

But it is quite clear from what appears in the Press—I get from our own Press who have derived it from other sources, notably Italian sources and perhaps Russian sources—that there has been a discussion between the parties concerned, I mean Russia and Germany and Italy, of more detailed terms of peace.

We do not know what has really passed, but it is quite clear that somebody is going to submit, whether formally or by broadcast, otherwise detailed terms for the consideration of the Government. I think it is very important that we should not come to a hurried conclusion. It needs very careful consideration.

I do not propose to do anything to weaken the Government, but I would ask the House and the Government to pause, not hurry to come to a conclusion if for instance there is a document which comes from the Italian Government or the Russian Government which as far as we are concerned are both neutral. I hope that the Government are treating them purely as neutrals. The First Lord did so on Sunday night, and it is vital that we should not multiply our enemies. We have got quite as much as we can do to conquer one without adding one or two more.

Let us consider what we are doing. We are entering upon something which involves the whole life of this Empire and the whole future of our people. What I want to ask the Prime Minister is this. Suppose we get a document of that kind which makes a difference in two respects. In the first place it comes from neutral Governments and in the second place they will be just as involved as we are in seeing that whatever terms are agreed to are implemented. They will not be dependent merely on the word of one Government. You will have the signatures of

last two more. The third question is that of disarmament, because no peace would be a permanent peace unless it involved some agreement with regard to disarmament.

Then there would be the question of whether the United States of America should be brought in. In my judgment, if you had a conference I will not say it would be fatal but it would be a first-class mistake to enter into it unless you invited not merely Russia and Italy but also the United States of America. There you have one great Power the interests of which are not European interests and which has not been involved in any of these European disputes and quarrels. I should like to ask the Prime Minister whether he does not think it desirable, when he gets a more detailed proposal—a proposal which has a backing which is less suspect, at any rate than any one which we have had up to the present, more detailed and less tainted—that we should have a discussion on it in the House?

THE PRIME MINISTER. At present we have received no such proposal and I think it is too soon to assume that we are going to have proposals of such a detailed and comprehensive character as the right hon. Gentleman was suggesting would be made. On the other hand it is quite possible that the offer might prove to be one which no self-respecting Government could consider at all. In such circumstances, I think really it would be wrong for me to say what the Government would do in circumstances which have not yet arisen. I will only say this in answer to the question which the right hon. Gentleman has put to me. He said: If any such proposal is put forward do not be in a hurry to give it an answer. I entirely agree. I see no reason why we should be in a hurry to give an answer to a proposal which really appeared to require serious consideration.

will to day confess that the determination of the House was wrong or that the statement of the Prime Minister repeated over and over again was unworthy of the House or the country

Twelve months ago the Prime Minister came back from Munich with far more satisfaction than I thought the circumstances warranted I was disturbed very much by the extent of the settlement and the territorial changes in Middle Europe which then took place All we then saw was that the bastions of defence for the smaller Danubian countries were being handed over to Germany The justification for that was that the people who occupied the Sudetenland and Czecho Slovakia were German by race and the principle of self determination and the machinery of plebiscites were put forward to defend the change and the surrenders which took place in September last year Since then there have been rapid extensive and far reaching changes on the Continent of Europe On 15th March the Germans overran Bohemia and Moravia and added to the Reich in the form of a Protectorate a disguised form of slavery in which 10 000 000 non Germans were added to the Reich The principle of self-determination and the machinery of plebiscites were completely set aside in that transaction

Now there has been the attack upon Poland and a new partition In this partition 22 000 000 new subjects the overwhelming majority of them unwilling to be transferred have been added to the German Reich and taken over by force after bloodshed after treason and after horrible barbarities upon the civilian population The German Reich now contains 20 000 000 more non Germans In the last twelve months 30 000 000 non German people have been torn from their own lives and added to the Nazi regime in Germany to be compelled not only to forswear their nationality but to accept Nazi ideas in the government of the people and of the individual This is not the end Perhaps next month when every day smaller countries are being coerced and compelled one by one—

COMMANDER SIR ARCHIBALD SOUTHBY By Russia

MR GRENFELL I know what Russia has done It has been a most despicable act We say in this country that kicking a man when he is down is the act of a coward Russia stepped in and kicked Poland when she was prostrate and shook hands with the aggressor There is no word for it I do not know what Russia proposes to do in future but I am sure it does not reduce the crime against Poland by one iota because there have been two aggressors instead of one Poland was a nation of people struggling to revive their national life after a century and a half of disorganisation and after the repudiation of all claims to nationality My right hon friend made this speech to day but he had written articles denouncing the Poles condemning and reviling the victim and not the aggressor I do not speak with authority except the

authority of a conscience which I have kept as clear as I can all my life. I speak here in the presence of my fellow-Members and of the public who listen to our words and report them, and I say that I am a man who would give my life to see Europe freed from the menace of war and tyranny.

MR. STEPHEN: Will the hon Member allow me?

HON. MEMBERS: Sit down

MR. GRENFELL. I would give my life and I am willing—

MR STEPHEN: You are afraid to give way

MR GRENFELL: I am afraid of nothing in life. I may be guilty of shortcomings, but not of fear, and I speak here with the confidence that I shall not be misunderstood. I should like to see peace this minute in Europe. Who wants to go on? [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear"] Yes, but there are conditions of peace. Peace itself is a condition of peace—thoughts of peace and desires for peace. I shall not try to pronounce or to picture the details of any possible offer that may come, but I would say to-day, or to-morrow, or for another year, or two years or three years of struggle in a cause which I believe to be just, that the conditions for the resumption of friendly contacts in Europe are the conditions which previously existed. I would sum it up in one phrase—Europe ought to be willing, ought to be ready, to discuss peace when we have gone back at least as far as the status quo ante-Munich, when the Czechs are to be masters in their own country and when the Poles are to regain their national rights—when that has been done and the Germans are back in Germany and the Russians are back in Russia. If they want peace, why do they not go back to their own country?

MR. STEPHEN: Do you want to declare war on Russia?

MR. GRENFELL: When that has been done I would talk about peace, and when I am talking about peace in Europe I am not merely talking about national boundaries and the exchange of political formulas. To build up a secure peace in Britain, whether it comes soon or whether it comes late, you must first provide the firm foundations of economic order and economic justice between the peoples of Europe.

MR MCGOVERN: . . . To-day we have the spectacle of Poland beaten to her knees. My hon. Friends and I opposed the pledge that was given to Poland; we could not agree to the giving of a pledge which called for the lives of the workers in this country to defend it. We had our own ideas about the ruling class of Poland, and we gave expression to those views. But to-day there is a more difficult proposition. I heard the speech made by the right hon Gentleman the Member for Carnarvon Boroughs. I am never prepared to hear turned down or treated with contempt a proposal

of any kind, but I say that in my honest estimation, if the Government of this country made peace now, they would be handing over to Hitler more than he would have got if the war had never taken place. I say that only for the purpose of making an analysis. We are told, on the other hand, that we must go on. There are some people, like the right hon. Gentleman the Member for St. George's (Mr. Duff Cooper), who want to go on, but there is no attempt made to define the end. When people talk about going on, they should face up to what they mean in a responsible manner.

In Berlin, in the Hitler club, at two o'clock in the morning, I was discussing the prospect of war with a Nazi, a young man who had been at Edinburgh University for three or four years. I said to him, "If you go to war, isn't there a chance of a tremendous rising in Germany?" I will give to the House that young man's answer, and I ask the hon. Members seriously to consider it. He said, "McGovern, the German nation has had one defeat in war. They know what that defeat meant to them. When the Peace Treaty of Versailles was imposed upon them, the French and British bankers imposed a peace that took our coal from our mines, that took 150,000 head of cattle from our fields, that left our children without milk and nourishment, that took 25,000 engines and 150,000 railway carriages from us, that took away all our shipping, that imposed a tremendous monetary penalty upon us as a nation, although we had not been responsible for the war in any way if one accepts the Socialist dictum that economic struggles are the cause of war; but," he said, "1,000,000 of our children died of malnutrition, mothers could not even give sustenance to their children, we had 8,000,000 or 9,000,000 unemployed walking the streets, bare of back and without boots or shoes on their feet; we went through the most intense poverty and suffering, without fires, without proper food, with families of five or six unemployed. To-day," he said, "no matter what your ideas are, whether it is because of militarism or not, these people are in employment, they are earning wages, there is no unemployment in Germany; we have brought in half a million workers from other countries to carry out our industrial task." He then said, "We only require to say to these people, 'There is a chance of a repetition of that 1918-1933 tragedy,' and every German will respond and die for the Fatherland, giving his last drop of blood, rather than surrender to those Allied bankers as in 1918."

There is the answer. He made me ponder and think deeply. I have said before and I say again that there is only one revolt that can take place in Germany to-day, and that is a revolt by the military. But a military machine does not revolt when it is having tremendous victories; it revolts, as did the Russian army, in disaster, defeat, demoralisation, hunger and sacrifice; but it does not run away and surrender in the conditions we see in Germany to-day, after Poland has been polished off with a one-month's campaign.

The first phase of the war came to an abrupt end with the invasion of Germany of Denmark and Norway. The House of Commons pursued its valuable function on constructive criticism but it became clear that that function was not universally welcome. An account of the work it did in this sphere forms a considerable part of Volume II of the Penguin Hansard which deals with our war effort under the Chamberlain Government and the vitalising influence of the Churchill Government which succeeded it. Parliament did not discover much of present or future value in Mr Chamberlain's reconstruction of his team: the reader of the Debates gathers the impression that events rather than men were in the saddle. Members were sceptical of the success of several Ministers and their Departments. The great debates on the work of the Air Ministry, the Ministry of Agriculture, the War Office and the Ministry of Supply, especially those of March 1940, showed the development of a determination to hold a tight rein on war policy. Anger was gaining upon patience. The increasing strength of the enemy was apparent. The events in Norway brought things to a head. The chapter which follows marks an epoch in the history of the House of Commons as well as in the war. What can be told here of the events in Finland is retrospective: it prepared the way for the Commons' revolt against the Chamberlain Government's policy.

13th March 1940

THE PRIME MINISTER (MR CHAMBERLAIN) His Majesty's Minister in Helsinki was informed this morning by the Finnish Minister for Foreign Affairs that Soviet Finnish peace terms were signed in Moscow last night and that an armistice had been arranged at 11 a.m. to-day Finnish time between the two armies.

Throughout the Soviet Finnish struggle His Majesty's Government in concert with the French Government have furnished to the Finns large quantities of war material and supplies of all sorts, particulars of which have been made known as far as it was in the public interest to do so. His Majesty's Government have in fact made plain their readiness to give all possible help to the Finns in their gallant struggle against aggression and as I informed the House on Monday we had made preparations to throw the full weight of all our available resources into the scales in hearing that this would be in accordance with the desires of the Finnish Government. It has always been understood that it was for the Finnish Government to decide upon the course of action which they considered best suited to their interests in the light of all available knowledge. In their decision they may be assured that the people of this country are united in sympathy for the situation in which they find themselves and in admiration for the courage with which they have maintained for so long the struggle against overwhelming odds. This epic story will ever be recounted in the chronicles of their own history and will remain alive in the memory of all peoples.

MR ATTLEE May I say that on this side we all agree in our admiration for the Finns in their struggle and that while we are all of us relieved that slaughter should have been stopped we deeply regret the success of aggression. May I ask the Prime Minister whether he does not agree that just as this country has been willing to assist the Finns in defending themselves against aggression so we shall render them all the assistance we can in order to repair the damages of this unprovoked attack upon a free people?

MR HORE BELISHA While associating myself with the expressions of sympathy for the Finns is it not a fact that repeated appeals have been made by that country for assistance, not only in material but in men and is it not a pity in relation to the magnitude of these events and of their far reaching character, to plead as an excuse for inaction a pure technicality?

THE PRIME MINISTER It is not correct that repeated requests for men have been made by the Finnish Government. The Finnish Government have made repeated requests for materials and every one of these requests has been answered. They have been informed as long ago as 25th February that, if they were to make an appeal to us we would be prepared and were making preparations to send them men as well as materials. In the situation in which they find themselves they have decided not to make such an appeal.

SIR ARCHIBALD SINCLAIR May I also ask the Prime Minister this question? When he referred to the particulars which had been given to the Finns may I ask him whether the Government accept responsibility for the statements which were made last Saturday in the newspapers of the quantity of material assistance which had been given to the Finns? May I ask him whether these statements were not greatly exaggerated whether they were intended to be an estimate of the amount of help which did reach the Finns or even was on its way to reach the Finns at that time from this country and may we have an official statement now of the actual amount of assistance—guns shells ammunition and so forth—which has been sent from this country?

THE PRIME MINISTER No Sir the Government do not take responsibility for the statements to which the right hon Gentleman referred. We have never made any official complete statement of the amount of assistance which has been given to Finland. No doubt some distinction must be made as the right hon Gentleman made it between what was sent and what had actually arrived in Finland because it has taken some considerable time for material sent to Finland to reach that country. As to whether we shall issue any official statement of the actual material which has been sent to Finland I would like to have notice and to consider that question.

MR. A. HENDERSON: Will the Prime Minister take this opportunity of neutralising German propaganda by making it quite clear that His Majesty's Government at no time threatened to violate the neutrality of Sweden and Norway?

THE PRIME MINISTER: There was never any threat to violate that neutrality.

MR. HORE-BELISHA: May I ask the right hon. Gentleman whether he confirms the statement which was made in the French Chamber by M. Daladier yesterday, that an expeditionary force consisting of 50,000 French soldiers, and still more British troops, was actually ready; whether this force was promised to the Finns for their assistance, or were any restrictions placed upon its use in the defence of Finnish territory—restrictions which had the effect of causing the Finns to believe that it was inadequate to repel Russian aggression? May I also ask whether I can have an answer to my earlier question as to whether the House will have an opportunity of debating this question?

THE PRIME MINISTER: With regard to the last question, we have had no official request for a Debate on the subject. If I received a request, I should have to consider it when it was made. With regard to the statement to which the right hon. Gentleman refers, I have endeavoured to obtain an accurate account of what was said by M. Daladier, but I have not yet received it, and until I do, I prefer not to comment upon it.

MR. HAROLD MACMILLAN: Would my right hon. Friend take seriously into consideration the desire of the House that this matter should be debated, and if it is to be debated, that it should be debated under conditions upon which speeches can be delivered which will not be contrary to the public interest? Would he, in other words, allow on this matter a Debate to be held in private, because in a Debate held in public any Member who had regard to his duty would find it very difficult to discuss the conduct of this matter during the last few months?

THE PRIME MINISTER: I do not think that that is a matter which I can discuss across the Floor of the House.

19th March, 1940.

THE PRIME MINISTER (MR. CHAMBERLAIN): The last time that I made a general statement to the House on the progress of the war was on the 8th February, but since then I have made a short statement on the 13th March, when I informed the House of the conclusion of peace between Finland and the Soviet Union. I wish I could say that further reflection since then had in any way modified our first impression that a great tragedy had occurred. Unhappily, closer examination and consideration

of the peace terms only confirms the view that they were in fact such as could only have been accepted by a proud people like the Finns under dire compulsion, and it is of no use to pretend that they do not gravely compromise the independence and integrity of that country.

It is a bitter thought indeed for all lovers of freedom that the prolonged and heroic defence of the Finns was, in the end, unable to withstand the overwhelming superiority in numbers and equipment of their foe; but if the Finns did in the end suffer defeat their stand was not in vain. They have preserved their honour and they have won the respect of all the world. Their Government, the Government which fought the war, still hold office, their Army is intact, the spirit of their people is unbroken, and if in spite of all we in this country did we were unable to save Finland from her fate, still perhaps our power to help Finland is not at an end. We shall watch with the deepest sympathy her efforts to rebuild her national life and if, as indeed seems almost certain, further aid is required in order to help her to her feet, I know that this country will gladly take its share with others in contributing to the regeneration of Finland.

The collapse of the Finnish resistance caused a profound shock throughout the world. Once again we were compelled to see another small State the victim of that policy of aggression which she had taken up arms to resist. It was, of course, only to be expected that German propaganda would exploit this event in order to remove responsibility from themselves and to throw it upon others, but she cannot escape her responsibility. Finland would never have been invaded if it had not been for the Pact between Germany and the Soviet Union, and it was only German threats which terrified the Scandinavian countries into withholding the help which might, perhaps, have saved her. Any suggestion, that the Allies, this country and France, in any way failed in their obligation to do their utmost to assist Finland in her need, is one which cannot for one moment be maintained, and, least of all, should such a suggestion come from individuals in countries far away from the seat of war who have never felt any anxiety for their friends or for themselves. But it is right that we in this country should now, at this stage, ask ourselves whether we can feel that we have clear consciences in this matter, and whether in fact we did all we possibly could. That is the question I propose to answer this afternoon.

I think it would be convenient if I considered it under the two heads—assistance in material, and assistance in men. I will begin with material. First of all, I would remind any potential critic that we ourselves are at war, and we are facing an unscrupulous and very powerful foe. For many weeks his forces have been mounted ready for an attack which can be delivered in a few hours, and on our side we have been, therefore, straining every nerve to build up our own forces of defence and attack and so, necessarily, all our strategy has been directed towards our main

objective and all requests received by us for help from friendly neutrals must continually be weighed in the balance against our own need. That applied to Finland as much as it did to any other neutral friendly country. Much as we desired to give to Finland all that she asked from us, we had always to bear in mind that whatever we gave must necessarily be at the expense of our own strength and at the risk of our own people.

Secondly, it is well to bear in mind that the geographical position of Finland in relation to this country rendered the transport of material exceedingly difficult. Not only did that material have to traverse the North Sea, exposed to any dangers which might be there, but it also had to take its passage through two other countries and along a railway which was already seriously overloaded. Having passed through those two countries, it still had to go a long distance through Finland itself by a railway which was never meant to carry such loads as were imposed upon it. Those are two formidable difficulties. Nevertheless, in spite of them, no appeal that was made to us by the Finnish Government remained unanswered.

Hostilities first broke out on 30th November. At that date the Finnish Government had orders placed in this country with private firms for certain war material and the first request they made to us was that we would do anything we could to facilitate the earliest possible despatch of such part of those orders as had not already been delivered. That we did. After 30th November, numerous requests were made to us by the Finnish Government for material. They were of a very diverse character. They came to us through many different channels and they varied in emphasis from time to time, so that it is not easy to paint a precise picture of the situation at any particular moment. But I may say that as the war progressed, the stress which was laid by the Finnish Government upon various kinds of equipment changed as the character of the war changed. For instance, in the earlier stages, the chief demand made to us was for fighter aeroplanes. At a later stage, bombing aeroplanes were asked for and considerable quantities of small arms ammunition. Later still, the greatest emphasis was placed upon the supply of guns, and so it went on.

Hon. Members will realise that while undoubtedly the Finns were justified in varying their requests to us according to what they felt at any particular time to be their greatest need, yet the fact that it was sometimes one thing and sometimes another that was wanted made it difficult for us to plan ahead to any considerable extent. Nevertheless, every request was considered promptly and fully and was met, as far as it was possible to meet it, in view of the conditions imposed by our own needs. Perhaps it will be convenient if I give the House a list of the material that was actually promised to Finland and also what was actually sent. On the whole, I think it will be found that what was sent was different from what was promised, but hon. Members state that, as the position became more serious, as the

so the demands increased in number and in character and some of the most pressing demands were received so late that, although we had promised to meet them, we had not had time actually to despatch the material before the terms of peace were announced.

I agree that there is some disadvantage in giving this list. Nevertheless, when charges are being bandied about that the aid which this Government had promised to send to Finland was totally out of proportion to that for which we were asked, I think it only right and fair to ourselves that we should give this list, and, on the whole, I think the advantages of giving it outweigh the disadvantages. This, then, is the list :

Aeroplanes, promised, 152 ; actually sent, 101.

Guns of all kinds, promised, 223 ; sent, 114.

Shells promised, 297,200 ; actually sent, 185,000.

Vickers guns, promised, 100 ; all sent.

Marine mines, promised, 500 ; sent, 400.

Hand-grenades, promised, 50,000 ; all sent.

Aircraft bombs, promised, 20,700 ; sent, 15,700.

Signalling equipment, promised, 1,300 sets ; sent, 800.

Anti-tank rifles, promised, 200 ; all sent.

Respirators, promised, 60,000 ; all sent.

Greatcoats, promised, 100,000 ; all sent.

Battle-dress suits, promised, 100,000 ; all sent.

Anti-tank mines, promised, 20,000 ; sent, 10,000.

Ambulances, promised, 48 ; all sent.

The list includes many minor items such as medical stores, tents, equipment, sandbags, steel helmets, sand, etc., and also large quantities of small arms ammunition, and I may add, in fact, that arrangements were made here for the manufacture of very large supplies of ammunition and ammunition cases. I think that list will show that we did not hesitate, even at risk to ourselves, to meet the Finnish needs as far as it was possible for us to do so. I have only to add that everything was done to despatch these articles with the minimum of delay.

Now let me come to what is, perhaps, even more important, the question of men. In the middle of January our representative was informed by Field-Marshal Mannerheim that he did not then require men, as his resources in man-power were sufficient, in his opinion, to last until the thaw came. He did, however, say that he would be very glad to have some 30,000 men in May, but he stipulated that they should be trained soldiers. I ask the House to bear in mind those two facts—30,000 men, to arrive in Finland in May. At the same time, we were given to understand that both Finland and Sweden were nervous about—

MEMBERS : "Norway and Sweden?"

No, I am quite right. Both Finland and Sweden were nervous about the reactions of Germany, and they both, therefore, hoped that any forces sent would not be sent officially. Those views of the Field-Marshal

were at once considered by the Cabinet. Already an unofficial bureau for the enlistment of volunteers was being set up but, having examined the situation the Cabinet felt satisfied that an effective force for aiding Finland was not possible on a volunteer basis and that the reinforcements required for May would only be available if they were raised on an official basis as a properly organised expedition.

We had this subject thoroughly explored. We had plans prepared. Those plans were discussed and approved at a meeting of the Supreme War Council which was held on 5th February. Preparations for the expedition were carried out with all rapidity and at the beginning of March the expedition was ready to leave. Those critics who complain of the dilatoriness of the Allies and say that they should have prepared beforehand must have been ignorant of the facts which I have just given to the House because Members will see that the moment we heard from Finland what their requirements were we lost no time in preparing to meet them and that in fact the expedition was made ready two months before Field Marshal Mannerheim had asked for it to arrive.

Let me say something of the size of the expedition because here are some who have expressed scepticism as to whether such an expedition ever existed. Let me tell the House what the facts are. Let me say this first. In constructing our plans for the expedition there were two overriding factors which had to be borne in mind. The first was this. No effective expedition could arrive in Finland except by passing through Norway and Sweden. Therefore before such an expedition could be despatched or before it could arrive in Finland it was necessary to obtain the assent of the Governments of those two countries. It did not take much imagination to conceive what would be the attitude of Germany if such assent were given. We were conscious that these two countries would have to brave the wrath of Germany. As a matter of fact we know now that Germany as soon as she heard any rumours of such a force passing through those two countries to the assistance of Finland did threaten Norway and Sweden with her intervention if they gave their assent. Therefore we felt that we must be ready also to provide a force to come to the assistance of Sweden in defending herself if she should be attacked by Germany.

The second factor was that if these two Governments gave their assent in the circumstances which I have described the transport facilities in Norway and Sweden placed a definite limit on the size of the force which could be transported in any given period. What did we do in these circumstances? We decided to provide the largest force which would be permitted by the physical conditions we had to encounter. As I have already stated part of that force would be required for the assistance of Sweden if she were attacked by Germany and part of it would be the expedition which was destined to help Finland, and of

course, in addition to that certain troops would be required to guard the long line of communications. The size of the force arrived at on that basis was about 100,000. It was heavily armed and equipped, and plans were made for it to begin reaching Scandinavia in March and for the whole of it to arrive before the end of April. Of course, hon. Members will realise that this was not necessarily the last force which we should have had to send. It was the largest force that we could send at one time to begin with. The question of further reinforcements was one which would have had to depend on the development of the fighting after the fighting had begun.

In the second half of February we informed the Finns of these plans, and arrangements were made with them to cover the main points which would have to be settled beforehand, such as the relations of the command to the command in Finland and the area in which the troops were to be employed. But bearing in mind the very difficult position of Norway and Sweden if their assent were required, we suggested to the Finns that they should make a public appeal for assistance not later than 5th March, and after that public appeal had been made, we proposed ourselves to make a formal appeal to the Governments of Norway and Sweden to allow the passage of the expedition which I have described. We hoped that, in face of a public appeal from Finland, the two countries concerned would feel that they could not stand in the way of what might be the salvation of their near neighbour and friend.

little time longer. In the meantime, the Finnish Ministers in Paris and London asked whether we could send 50,000 men to Finland within a month. To that we replied that the proposals we had already made to them provided for the largest force which it was physically possible to transport, making the maximum use of the ports and railways which would be at our disposal. We added that we were prepared to increase the original force to any extent and as rapidly as possible in the light of experience and of military developments.

In the end, the date which the Finns themselves had fixed as the final one on which they would give us their decision passed without any decision being given, and the next day we heard that peace terms had been accepted. It is not for us to criticise the Finns. Any country that put up such a fight as they did must be immune from all criticism. In giving the House this faithful record of what passed between them and us I want to make it absolutely clear that we recognised all through their right to make their own decision in the light of the facts as known to them, and as, perhaps, they could not be known to us. We were bound to accept that decision whether we ourselves would have preferred another or not.

What emerges from this account which I have given? First, of all, except for the Field-Marshal's intimation in January that he would wish to have 30,000 men in May, no request of any sort for land forces was made to us by the Finns. I have mentioned the inquiry which they made in the very last days before the peace terms were signed, but that was an inquiry, not a request. The only request we had was the one in January. Secondly, it is clear that, in spite of the fact that we had received no appeal, in spite of the fact that we had repeated refusals from Norway and Sweden to permit the passage of our troops through their countries, nevertheless, we went on with our preparations until they were complete, and even at the last moment we could have sent the expedition if the conditions had changed.

MR. RADFORD (Manchester, Rusholme): Will my right hon. Friend make it clear whether the preparations he has described were made jointly with our French allies?

THE PRIME MINISTER: This was a joint expedition of British and French. I think it is clear that no time was lost over the preparations. Hon. Members will appreciate that for an expedition of that character to a country like Finland, in the conditions of climate which had to be experienced, ample preparations were necessary. These were all made, and the expedition could have arrived long before the date asked for if Norway and Sweden had given encouragement. Lastly, I think I have made it clear that the expedition was on the largest scale which could be contemplated in view of the physical conditions of transport which had to be encountered in Scandinavia.

I say without hesitation that neither Britain nor France have anything with which to reproach themselves in their action throughout this affair. What about Germany? I need hardly remind hon. Members of the floods of German rhetoric have been poured out on Finland since 1918, when a German Army took some small part in freeing Finland from Bolshevism. Every German leader, from Hitler downwards, has exhausted himself in declaring how Germany once saved Finland from the Red menace, and how she would never fail again to support her if she were menaced, since Germans regarded Finland as a bulwark of European civilisation. And yet, when Finland was once more threatened, when once more she put her tiny forces into the field to resist the huge hordes that came against her, Germany publicly professed her neutrality; but behind the scenes she used every threat to prevent others from saving Finland and from performing the task which she had always declared to be her own. The responsibility in this affair stands squarely and firmly upon the shoulders of Germany and no other country. It was the fear of Germany which prevented Norway and Sweden from giving us the permission to pass our troops through their countries, the fear of Germany which prevented Finland from making her appeal to us for help.

What is the result to Scandinavia? The security of Finland has gone, but has the security of Norway and Sweden been preserved? On the contrary, the danger has been brought closer than ever to those two countries, till to-day it stands upon their doorsteps. We here, I think, are bound to feel some sympathy for the position of these two countries, who for long years have thought they stood far enough outside the centre of disturbance to be safe, who felt that the one thing they desired was not to suffer in their countries the fate which had overtaken Czechoslovakia and Poland, who thought that by scrupulously observing, stretching perhaps to the furthest limit, the restrictions of neutrality, they could escape that terrible fate. One must have some sympathy for them in their comparatively unarmed condition, faced with such alternatives as lay before them, but I am bound to point out that this doctrine of neutrality, which paralysed the action of Norway and Sweden, was based on the assumption that anything was better for a small neutral country than to be involved in the war between Germany and the Allies. That, in turn, was based upon another assumption, the assumption that it was a matter of indifference to these small neutral States whether the war ended in the victory of Germany or the victory of the Allies. Until those assumptions are abandoned, and the necessary deductions are drawn from that abandonment, the policy of these small neutral States will neither correspond to realities nor will it be adequate to safeguard their own interests. Nothing will save them but a determination to defend themselves and to join with others who are ready to aid them in their defence.

In the later days of the period I have been reviewing, Europe

was greatly interested in the distinguished visitor who came from the United States of America and who, after a brief stay in Rome, in Berlin and in Paris, arrived in London on 10th March and left on the 14th. . . . When he returned to Italy he found himself in the presence of a new event, the meeting of the two Dictators on the Brenner Pass. That meeting has naturally given rise to many speculations as to its purpose. Some have thought that it was for the purpose of elaborating new peace proposals. I do not know whether that is true or not. For aught I know these two gentlemen may have spent their time in discussing the conditions under which an Italian ship was destroyed yesterday by a German mine with the loss of Italian lives. Whatever may be the outcome, Sir, we are ready to meet it, and we are not likely to be diverted from the purpose for which we entered this war. I am sure that hon. Members read with pleasure and with warm approval the eloquent words of President Roosevelt in a recent address in which he declared that America was seeking for a moral basis, and in phrases to which all of us could subscribe he defined what is and what is not a moral peace. It is to obtain just such a peace that we have taken up arms. We intend to fight until it has been secured. . . .

I know that there are some who would urge a more vigorous policy, who say that by some unexplained imaginative stroke of daring we ought, as they say, to wrest to ourselves the initiative. With the responsibility that rests on the shoulders of the Government, we cannot be hustled into adventures which appear to us to present little chance of success, and much chance of danger and, perhaps disaster. The time and the place for us to strike must be decided upon with the most expert advice that we can command. In the meantime, the best way in which we can ensure our ultimate victory is to preserve unshaken our determination and our unity. We have vast and redoubtable Allies; we have our kinsmen in the British Empire, and we have our loyal and trusted friends across the Channel, with their magnificent Army and their unlimited patriotism. Best of all, we have the consciousness that we are fighting for what every right-minded citizen in the world desires, that is, the establishment of a durable and moral peace, such as that of which the President spoke in the words to which I have alluded.

Mr. ATTLEE (Limehouse): It is all to the good that before we depart for a short Easter Recess we should have a statement by the Prime Minister and a Debate in this House. Events are moving, and it is right that our people should know as much as possible of what is going on and what is being done. I have heard the suggestion that we cannot discuss these matters except in secret Session. The secret Session has its place during a war. There may well be occasions in the coming months when it may be desirable for this House to debate in private, but I am not quite sure that that would take the place of the full and free discussion

that we have openly before the world, Debates in which we are free to give our opinions but in which every one of us is conscious of his responsibility in what he says.

Therefore, I wonder whether this is the occasion, coming as it does after six months of war, for saying something on the general issue besides the immediate position in regard to Finland. I am sure that we all deplore that the magnificent fight put up by a free people has resulted in the way it has. They were fighting for their freedom and against aggression. We have no commitments there, but we have our commitments under the League of Nations, and it is well to remember what those commitments are. They are not solely a duty upon us. That duty was laid upon all Member States when aggression had been declared. The giving of assistance is conditioned by various things—by proximity, ability and by the extent of other commitments. The nearest neighbours to Finland, namely, Sweden and Norway, were in a difficult position. I do not know whether we yet know all that was done by those countries, having regard to their position, their danger and their ability. The number of men that we could send was conditioned by whether we could act in concert with Sweden and Norway without any encroachment on their rights. Any attack on the U.S.S.R. was out of the question. We had to deal with the matter and to do what we could within the terms of the Covenant. We had to give such aid as Finland wanted, but in giving that aid we had to be sure that the amount of aid we gave was not going to bring down upon them disastrous consequences.

Everybody realises the difficulty of that situation. The Prime Minister has stated the position. We do not know exactly what the need was or the exact position of the countries concerned, but the Government had to weigh what they could send, by way of guns, aeroplanes and the rest, in the light of the true circumstances affecting this country's safety. We are not in a position to say that our Government could have sent more with safety. I leave it at that, but I will say this: I should like to be certain that what we did send was sent there in time and that there were no unnecessary delays. I do not think that it is necessary to follow the matter out in all its details, but we want to be sure that there was vigour in this matter.

With regard to the decision to send troops, it can be said that the Allies did agree to send a large body of troops and that they also made an effort to deal with any threat there might be from Germany. It is very important, and it should be stated on the Floor of this House, that we were ready to aid Finland against aggression. Those countries have been in a position to make it not easy for us to bring effective aid. I want other countries to realise that we were able and willing to give effective aid. I was glad to hear the Prime Minister say that we should help the Finns in their difficult work of reconstruction, and I hope that example will be followed by others, whatever their exact responsibility

may be in international law. I hope they will fulfil their responsibilities in the name of civilisation and will bring to bear every help they can to aid the Finns to repair the damage that they sustained in fighting for freedom.

The right hon. Gentleman the Prime Minister referred to the visit of Mr. Sumner Wells. We were very glad to see him here and to meet him and I believe that we were all very impressed by him. I believe that he will be found to be a true reporter when he goes back to see President Roosevelt. I think he realises the determination of the people of this country. He will know that we all want peace but I think he will know too that we want a real peace and a peace of principle. This Finnish matter cannot be separated from the general international outlook to day. We have to recognise that the cause of freedom did suffer a setback there and we have to repair the damage because we are fighting in this common field for victory. We have to see that we are doing all we can on the diplomatic, the military and the economic field. We find ourselves in this war fighting alongside our French Allies but we are without other allies. A lesson that we must learn from Finland is that if you want to defeat aggression you must stand together. It is a lesson that we preached to unwilling ears very often when we said that peace was indivisible and that aggression against one nation did affect us however far away it was. There was a fatal desire to think that we could live quietly by and let aggression go on against others because it did not affect us but we have to realise that to day no one wishes to see the area of this contest enlarged. We do not want to drag other nations into the slaughter. Remember that this war is not being fought only by military weapons it is being fought by blockade and economic pressure. We cannot see German influence converting friendly neutrality into enforced co-operation and we have to show the necessary qualities of initiative if we are not to risk the slipping away of our friends.

It is worth while to day just to look around. Six months have passed and we have been spared a major struggle. We have been spared great slaughter and we may be thankful for that. We have had a respite from really heavy fighting. It is as well when we are reviewing not only to look on the dark side. Our passive defence now should be extremely effective. We have big reserves of trained troops and munitions we have increased our air strength and have demonstrated the capacity of our armaments and machines and at sea we have met the German attack by air by mine and by torpedo and have swept German shipping practically either off the sea or under the sea.

But the real battle has not been joined and the real testing time still awaits us. Remember that the testing time will come but the waiting time is a test as well. At any time the blow may fall. At any rate we may have to meet an attack in which Herr Hitler throws everything into the scale in a ruthless attempt to gain a rapid decision by air by land or by sea. It may be that we shall

have to meet an attack carried on through other neutral States which have not yet been attacked. I trust that we are in every way prepared to meet that and I believe we can meet it. But let us remember that this may not be the tactic of Herr Hitler. He continues to evade a decision in the West. He may carry on his campaign of cajoling and terrorising the other States of Europe so as to try to confront us with a bloc of Europe—a kind of shaft to a German spearhead. It may be that he hopes given time he can make good from Russia and elsewhere the economic resources of which he stands in need. What people are asking is what are we going to be doing in the meantime if that is his tactic. We have to be active as well. A policy of sitting quiet would be suicidal. The Prime Minister was quite right in suggesting that anything we do must be the subject of very grave consideration. No one wants wild cat schemes. No one suggests that he should make breaches of international law. No one suggests I imagine that we should throw ourselves in a fit of despair against powerful lines without every possible thought. But I repeat that the initiative must not be left with Herr Hitler. You cannot have a policy of wait and see.

There remain two matters. First of all on the diplomatic front we have to do all we can to build up our strength with our Allies, our strength with those who may be our allies and with neutral opinion which is still overwhelmingly with us throughout the world if not among the rulers certainly among the people. We have to carry on on the economic front. Are we doing all we can to make our blockade effective? If there are loopholes we have to stop them. If our blockade is effective I want to ask the House to consider how long it will be effective. I think at present Germany is feeling that she has a lack of certain definite commodities. If the war blazes up actively, she will feel it still more. It may be that that lack will bring her down but one has to remember that the time during which that scarcity is affecting her may not be very long. If time is allowed to run on she may repair those defects. Therefore there may be a case now for such action as will make her waste her vital resources. I stress that point of the economic front. I think the Government must see to it that those who are directing it are given the freest possible hand for rapid and decisive action. I stress that point particularly. In war time you must have decision. You must act in time and action which might be useful now may be futile if it is delayed by reference to this or that authority. Therefore I make no apology for returning in this speech to the question of the organisation of the home front.

Whether the war is going to be short or long there is no excuse for not strengthening our home front and we must realise that we are meeting an enemy who has been organising for war and for that single purpose year after year. We cannot meet that by half measures. There is urgency. There is a need for drive. I do not feel that that is entirely effective in the actions of the

Government I am not asking for the adoption of Hitler methods—far from it. The methods employed in democracy must be different from those in autocracy. Where Hitler enforces, we must get the willing co-operation of all. The free spirit of our people is one of our greatest assets, but it must have direction to make it effective. A Prime Minister in war time must be ruthless with inefficiency. Every member of his team must be able to do his job or go and give place to someone else. We have to face the facts of the situation. This war is costing us something like £5,000,000 or £6,000,000 a day—it may be more. We must devote an ever increasing proportion of our man power to war production and we must make people realise that apart from what we can obtain in exchange from the interest or from the sale of foreign assets, apart from assistance from other parts of the Empire, we depend absolutely for winning this war, for maintaining our war services and for maintaining the standard of life of our people on what we can produce in this country whether for our own use and consumption or for exchange of things that we need from abroad, and we must realise that every atom of production is needed. We ought to be utilising all our man power. We cannot afford to waste. I suggest that there is a great need for much more to be done. We have to use all our material resources, our land, our coal and the rest. We have to use human resources in the best possible way.

I want to refer to only one or two things. Take first of all the vital question of food. We have had a number of discussions on food in the last few weeks. Is anyone satisfied that we are going to utilise to the full all our land? Have we been doing it during the last six months? If you pass up and down the country you will see any amount of land not used. Are we making preparations to use all that land to grow the food that we want? Are we going to have the labour on that land? I merely mention that as one of the big items. Take again coal. We have had mines for some time working only a day or so a week in Northumberland and Durham. That ought not to be so in war time. There are men unemployed in South Wales to-day. They ought all to be employed. Do not let us have the excuse that it is the bad weather. Whenever we touch on coal transport now the Minister says we have had very bad weather. These excuses must not go on too long. In South Wales in 1920 there were 171,000 men at work. There are only 135,000 to-day. There are idle pits and there are idle ships. We are failing, too, in distribution. That again is not solely due to bad weather. There is bad management as well as bad weather. Then there is the question of transport. We all recognise the great work that the railway companies are doing but they cannot do the whole job. You want a real co-ordination of transport—rail, road, canal and sea. Remember that in peace time our system of transport is wasteful. Are we now economising? I was rather shocked at an answer given to a question by the First Commissioner of

Works, though it may seem only a small point, about bricks being brought down from Somerset to somewhere in the Midlands. The criterion seemed to be the interest of the contractors, while the vital thing was the interest of the country. The railways have an interest in getting all the freight they can, but we as a nation have an interest in economising our transport and seeing that commodities are not necessarily sent from one end of the country to the other. We want a great deal more direction there.

May I now take the point of shipping? I shall not say more than that I wish more Members had been in the House and listened to that Debate. It was an extremely good Debate, and I think it showed that criticism in this House is useful and that some things which were being demanded months ago are now being done. But I was not satisfied that everything was being done. Only this week we had the question of the utilising of surplus steel rails lying on the roads. The Minister said he was going to act. But six months have gone by. These things ought to have been done at once. Only this week I had a letter from a certain city where they said a great new cinema, the fourth in that city, was now being erected, and the man was boasting of the immense amount of steel used in its construction. That should have been stopped. We cannot afford it. Hon. Members on both sides of the House have constantly talked of swill and pig food and it seems to me that that matter is being dealt with very inefficiently even now. We must have much more drive.

Finally I come to the utilisation of our man-power. A million men have been called up in the Army. We have the men in the Air Force, the Navy and in Civil Defence, and yet we still have 1,400,000 unemployed. I know that the Minister of Labour could dissect those figures and pass this one up his sleeve and the other one over his shoulder, but the fact remains that we have this mass of people who are unemployed, and it is no use saying, "Oh, but our trouble is with the older men." We had to depend on the older men in the last war, and we shall have to depend upon them to-day. I had a very spirited letter to-day from a man of 55 who wanted to join the Pioneer Battalion. He wanted work because he was unemployed. There are men whom it may not be possible to use and they ask what the Minister of Labour is doing to train men for the occupations in which they should be engaged. The whole of the training machinery should have been set to work to use up these men and to get them the right work. When we consider what we have to depend on in this war, we mainly depend upon what we produce. When in peace-time we consider the national income, we reckon on lots of people who are then valuable but who are not valuable in war-time. A man in peace-time may be worth £1,000 or £2,000 a year in his particular job, but when you come to the stern arbitrament of war he would be much more valuable to the country if he is producing £200 worth of foodstuffs a year.

There must be a great squeezing out of all kinds of unnecessary

occupations and the turning of people on to the vital work that is needed. Otherwise we are wasting our resources. I mentioned these particular ministries because I feel that we are not getting sufficient drive. I do not want to attack individual people because in doing so I might attack the wrong ones but I am concerned that we should have the right machinery for getting things going. The Minister within his own sphere should be able to take rapid decisions to get on with his job. Rightly or wrongly I have the impression that there is too much waiting for decisions, too much waiting for the Treasury permission and too much waiting about between Departments. I want to see a War Cabinet that formulates broad principles and takes decisions. I sometimes think the House has the idea that there is only one man who can give a decision, that man being the Prime Minister. Then when something goes wrong the question is asked: Will the Prime Minister look into it personally?

I do not want to open up again in detail the question of the composition of a war time Cabinet but I would say that a War Cabinet should be an instrument of decision and its members should be charged with taking big decisions in their own particular spheres and then within the ambit of the powers given to them the Ministers in charge of Departments ought to be able to get on with their jobs and get on with them rapidly. If the Ministers cannot get on with their jobs then we must get other Ministers. Allowing for the fact that a great deal has been done in the past six months I would ask: Is it enough for our needs? We are resolved to carry this matter through successfully. Do not let us make any mistake what we are up against. We are up against a very powerful people. If one looks at the Debates in this House and considers the feeling outside the general feeling is that more might be done. Whether the fault is due to methods or men I cannot tell but if either of them are wrong let them be changed.

SIR ARCHIBALD SINCLAIR (Caithness and Sutherland)

I was grateful to the Prime Minister for his frank declaration about the Russo-Finnish Peace Treaty. He did not invite us to labour under any delusions as to what that meant. It means a great defeat not only for the gallant Finnish nation but for the common cause which both we and the Finns have been defending. But in making such observations as I hope the House will allow me to make on this Finnish question I would like to start from ground which is common to the Prime Minister and myself. We are at war with an immensely powerful and efficient enemy. The question at issue in this conflict is whether Europe will rattle back into barbarism and gangster government or whether we can recreate our civilisation based on freedom, justice and the rule of law. We are trying to cure a deadly disease in Europe and the root of that disease lies in Germany.

The symptoms in Poland, Finland and elsewhere are and deeply distressing but they must not be allowed to

us from the main and tremendous task of curing the disease at the German root. The freedom and independence of Poland, Finland and the Baltic and Scandinavian countries depends not on any treaties or pacts which they may be able to conclude with the German or Russian practitioners of gangster politics, but on the victory of the Allies in the war against Germany. Therefore it would have been folly for the British Government to offer to help Finland merely because the cause of Finland was a righteous one. If help was unlikely to be effective and was going to weaken us in the fight against the chief enemy of civilisation, Nazi Germany, we ought not to have wasted our resources and made less likely the triumph of the common cause of Finland and Britain. It follows that the helping of Finland had to be considered in its due relation to the whole problem of the war.

If I may say so, the Prime Minister made a fine speech. He covered a great deal of ground, but he did not go back to the beginning of the story and, as he told us, he is to speak again at the end of the Debate. I would like to ask especially when it was that His Majesty's Government first considered the question of what call might be made upon the resources of this country in order to help Finland against Russian aggression. When was the Russian threat to Finland first brought to the notice of the Cabinet? It was on 5th October that Finland was first summoned to enter into negotiations with the Soviet Government, and I do not think there is a Minister in the Cabinet who did not have a very good idea of what that meant and of what course the negotiations would be likely to follow. It was on 20th November that the Russian invasion began. In those eight weeks had His Majesty's Government reached no decision as to what their attitude should be if the negotiations should break down and the Finns decided to fight? When did they first realise the gravity of the situation and make up their minds how to deal with it? On 13th December the Assembly of the League of Nations passed a Resolution calling upon each member of the League to give such help to Finland as it was able to do. His Majesty's Government promptly declared the very next day that they would render all the assistance in their power. From that moment whatever doubts might previously have been entertained about the wisdom of our intervention in Finland, we made common cause with the Finns and we could not allow them to be defeated without foreseeing that the result would be what the Prime Minister described to-day as a profound shock to the whole world, that we would suffer a damaging blow to our own self-confidence and to our prestige in every neutral country in the world. I submit to the House that no such announcement should have been made until the Government had made up their mind and had seen their way to put their decision into prompt and vigorous execution.

We have reached 14th December. When was it first decided to send any material at all? The Prime Minister has been good enough this afternoon to answer some Questions which I put on

he Order Paper for yesterday. He has told us the amount of material which was actually promised, and he gave another set of figures which represents—he will correct me if I am wrong—the amount of material actually despatched from this country—not, of course, the amount which arrived. The amount which arrived was very much smaller than those figures would indicate. It is true that the railway communications were bad, but towards the end of the time of Finnish resistance a road had been cleared across the ice to the Gulf of Bothnia—in fact, some weeks before the end of Finnish resistance, and at the end of that time that road could carry, I am informed, 600 tons of material. It seems very unfortunate that there was such a very great delay in getting the stuff delivered in Finland.

THE PRIME MINISTER: Perhaps I should mention that, on the most part, the delivery of this material was taken by the Finns in this country, so that they, and not His Majesty's Government, were responsible for its transport to Finland. The right hon. Gentleman may be under a misapprehension when he says that we are responsible.

SIR A. SINCLAIR: That is news to me, and I am grateful to the Prime Minister for his intervention. At the same time, I cannot help thinking—and the Prime Minister indicates, in his intervention, that that is the case—that there was a kind of common responsibility.

THE PRIME MINISTER: There was no common responsibility. If the delivery is taken here, there is no common responsibility. It should be remembered that this was merely voluntary assistance given by us.

SIR A. SINCLAIR: I will agree with the Prime Minister that the technical responsibility rested entirely on the Finns. I repeat the phrase "technical responsibility," because if you are at war and are helping people to fight for their lives against an enemy in their territory, it is not enough to stand on a question of technical responsibility. If you have made common cause with a country, it is your duty to see that everything is done to get the stuff there, and to get it there in time. [Interruption] You ought to send staff officers there, to see that the material arrives.

THE PRIME MINISTER: That is what we did.

SIR A. SINCLAIR: I am very glad to hear it, but that proves my point. There was a common responsibility, which the Government realised. The Government realised that, as I said, if you are in a war, helping a country to defend itself against aggression, you have to do all you can to help it to get the stuff. I hope that the Government in sending staff officers, did everything they could to prevent delay. All I am saying is that these delays did occur and that they prevented the Finns from getting more than a fraction

of the material—which the Prime Minister told us was substantial. The Prime Minister did not give the figure for one important kind of material, namely, small arm ammunition. Perhaps he refrained from giving that figure because he thought it not in the public interest to give it. In that case I will not give it myself, but I will give this figure. I suggest that, of the small arm ammunition which we promised, only about one-thirtieth or one-fortieth was ever despatched from this country. So much for material; now for men.

The right hon. Gentleman the Prime Minister has told us about the expeditionary force which the Government prepared to go to the assistance of the Finns, but he did not tell us about the despatch of volunteers. When was the despatch of volunteers first discussed by the Cabinet? When was the decision first made to authorise their despatch? We know that there were some volunteers collected. We know that a committee was set up. We know that an assurance was given about the effect of the Foreign Enlistment Act on the preparation for these volunteers. But when did these discussions take place? Were they promptly concluded? And when was the despatch of these volunteers ordered? I come to the question of the despatch of the expeditionary force. The Prime Minister has told us this afternoon that it was discussed with General Mannerheim in January, and that General Mannerheim then said that his requirement was an expeditionary force of 30,000 men to be in Finland by May. The Prime Minister further said that no further request at all was received from the Finnish Government, but that there was a further inquiry some time in March.

Here, again, I say that that is not enough to discharge the Government's responsibility to this House for the success of the enterprise in which they had engaged with Finland. Surely, there must have been staff officers at General Mannerheim's headquarters. There must have been staff officers and military attaches who were watching the operations on the front. There must have been some time at which they reported "The Finns cannot wait until May; the Finnish army cannot hold until May." It was not necessary, surely, for General Mannerheim or the Finnish Government to make a formal request. Surely, it was for the British Government to watch the situation on the front, particularly when the break through at Summa began. It must, by about the middle of February, have begun to be very doubtful, to the knowledge of our staff officers, whether in fact the Finnish line would hold until May unless assistance came before then. Was not this reported to the Cabinet? Was it not considered whether the assistance should go earlier? I hope the Prime Minister will be able to give us further information about that. It seems very curious—I do not want to use the word "curious," because that suggests something sinister, but it is unfortunate that the announcement of the despatch of this expeditionary force was made, first, by M. Daladier, only on a

late when it was practically certain that the expedition could not and would not be despatched.

MR. HOLDSWORTH (Bradford, South): It was much earlier than the date for which the expeditionary force was asked.

SIR WILLIAM DAVISON (Kensington, South): Nearly two months before that date.

SIR A. SINCLAIR: The hon. Members cannot have followed my argument. I repeated the information given by the Prime Minister that General Mannerheim had asked in January for this expedition to be despatched in May, but I said that we ought to have had information from our staff officers on the spot that, after January, the situation had begun to deteriorate. As soon as it began to deteriorate quickly, the sending of our expedition ought to have been expedited.

SIR W. DAVISON: And our observers on the spot ought to have overruled General Mannerheim?

SIR A. SINCLAIR: When the situation changed, the opinion of the general on the spot, if he were as great and skilful a general as Mannerheim, should have altered too, and our observer ought to have told us that the situation had altered. I cannot help thinking that he did inform the Government of the changed and more urgent requirements of the Finnish Army.

I do not know how many hon. Members have read extracts from the Press of foreign countries and heard broadcasts from other countries, and have realised how greatly this fiasco has affected our prestige abroad. It has deepened the impression that, while the Allies are good, they are slow, vacillating, and ineffective, and that, while the Germans are evil, they are vigorous, terrible, and efficient. Our withers may well be unwrung, as the Prime Minister says, by criticism from distant countries who have themselves not done very much to help the cause for which they express sympathy; but it is much more humiliating for us to read the verdict of that gallant soldier, Mannerheim. After thanking us, with dignity, for the war material which we did send, he says:

a draw which is the equivalent of defeat we can have our way Britain generally does win the last battle and I believe she will win it this time but it is not a natural law that she should There fore we need to exert ourselves in order to gain victory Flash adventures on the one hand and attempting tasks beyond our powers will certainly ensure defeat Inaction on the other hand will spell defeat and playing for safety will spell defeat We must seize the initiative and hold it both militarily and diplomatically The Prime Minister says that the Government's critics do not say in what direction they would seize the initiative but everybody agrees that we cannot possibly discuss strategy in open debate I am satisfied that everybody would be willing to put his ideas at the disposal of the Government if the Government wished to have a private Session for the purpose The Government the Prime Minister says will not be hustled [HON MEMBERS Hear hear] Hon Members cheer that because that is certainly true as we know from the experience of the last three years There is no doubt about it

MR MCGOVERN (Glasgow Shettleston) You would have hustled them into war long ago

SIR A SINCLAIR It is time we stopped saying What is Hitler going to do? What is Mussolini going to do? What is Stalin going to do? It is about time we asked What is Chamberlain going to do? But we cannot ask that in public Session nor can we investigate fully how the machinery of our war direction is working Parliament ought to consider we should not have more efficient national Imperial and inter Allied instruments of war direction than we now possess for it does not look from outside as though the present War Cabinet lopsided and unwieldy with the present means of Dominion and inter Allied consultation is capable of promoting vigorous and decisive initiative either economic or diplomatic or military It seems to me that we ought like the French Chamber and Senate to discuss these matters in private Session and discuss them soon I am glad that the Leader of the Opposition said just now that the time would come for us to have such a private Session and I think it is coming soon It is already too late to save Poland or Finland and we ought to thrash these things out before our cause suffers another damaging setback The whole of the case against a private Session fell to the ground in the last private Session It was not true as the Prime Minister averred that Members of Parliament would not be able to maintain secrecy It was not true that the wiles of the Press would wheedle the secrets out of Members of Parliament In no broadcast and in no news paper of any country of the world was any part of that secret Session divulged We cannot adequately probe these grave questions in public Session We owe it to the people whom we represent in this House to probe them before it is too late and the only way to do that is to have a private Session

MR HORE-BELISHA (Plymouth, Devonport). . . The war began with two swift strokes, one on either side Poland was annihilated and German commerce was swept from the seas. Since then, Germany has been inactive on land, and the Allies have applied the blockade. It is the sole offensive weapon that they have been employing to bring about the defeat of Germany. Is it enough, or must we intensify our pressure in other directions? In formulating our policy we should never forget that, in the last Great War, Germany endured the rigours of the blockade for four and a quarter years although during the whole of that time she was being compelled to expend her resources on several fronts. In this war she has gained through the instrumentality of Russia the advantage of having only one frontier to defend. Moreover, in the Great War she had no reserves, whereas on this occasion she is known to have accumulated considerable stores. In the absence of hostilities in the West she has been able to conserve her resources and to exploit those of her neighbours. By her trade treaties, based on figures for the years in which she was gathering in her stocks, she has been able to provide for imports above her normal. This is particularly noticeable in the case of her agreement with Italy. If the basic year had been 1936 instead of 1938, she would receive only half the imports that she has contracted to receive under that treaty. Thus it must be recognised that by all these means and by others she has mitigated, and is mitigating, the effects of our blockade. We would be wise to reckon on the possibility of her being able to continue to survive, if the war remains virtually passive.

On the other hand, if she has to conduct operations—and operations on an intensive scale—she must be sure of large and continuous supplies of those two vital commodities of modern war—iron ore and oil. It was her fear that her access to these two commodities might be put in jeopardy that made it a major concern of her policy to bring the operations in Finland to an end and in a way, of course, which would leave both herself and Russia with the predominant influence in Scandinavia—the predominant influence which my right hon. Friend has told us so audaciously this afternoon they have in fact obtained. Direct intervention by the Allies in Finland might, as the Germans well realise, have left the Allies with this predominant influence, and with it, as she had apprehended, Britain and France in a position to control the destination of the ore from the Gallivare Mines. The importance of these mines can be measured by the fact that Germany takes annually two thirds of their product and her industries are dependant for half their requirements upon them. Here then was one of the two keys to the winning of this war ‘Finland’s cross,’ or as the Prime Minister’s phrase was indeed, ‘ours.’ Further, as long as Russia was engaged in active operations in Finland, the date on which Germany have obtained the material advantages of her, particularly oil, was being postponed. To the extent

that it was in the interests of Germany to break down the resistance of Finland, it was in the interests of the Allies to maintain it.

Was it, however, a practicable proposition to send the forces necessary to save Finland? The problems of transport and maintenance, the geographical obstacles are evident at once from a glance at the map. It is impossible to minimise them. It was, indeed, possible to argue with conviction that the hazards were too great and the enterprise too perilous to be undertaken. That was a perfectly legitimate and understandable case, but the decision of the two Governments—Britain and France—is the authoritative answer to these and all other objections, such as those mentioned by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister this afternoon. He spoke, for instance, of the embarrassment of deciding whether it was a greater advantage to have your material in Britain or in France or elsewhere, but he settled that problem when the two Governments decided to send an expedition. With the best strategical advice at their disposal, they were able to assess all the difficulties and risks and to relate them to the value of the objective to be obtained. The Supreme War Council, having weighed all the facts, reached their decision on 5th February, and it must therefore be assumed that it was not only practicable but *desirable* to send a force to Finland, and all the arrangements for its despatch were put in motion.

It was from this moment, all doubts having been resolved, and the policy having been definitively fixed as being in the Allied interests, that the action of the Allies should have been clear-cut and decisive. Hesitation is permissible in the formulation of policies, but not, surely, in their execution. Events have shown that it was indeed unfortunate that the Allies allowed their intended initiative to be wrested from them. It was known by everybody that the need for men was urgent. Mr. Tanner, the Finnish Foreign Secretary, on 25th February made this statement:

"Finland hoped that action would follow words more quickly than has been the case. We shall need more substantial aid, especially planes, heavy artillery and men."

That is what Mr. Tanner said on 25th February, yet it was only on this very day, three weeks after the decision taken by the Supreme War Council and when the Finnish Government were already actually in contact with Moscow on the question of peace terms, that they were informed that the despatch of men, as well as materials, was contingent upon a further appeal being made by them. In the words of Mr. Ryti, the Prime Minister of Finland,

"the offer was made too late to be of any use,"

so it does not really matter what the reasons were or why it was not accepted. It was made too late to be of any use. My right hon. Friend has explained and, of course, it is an important fact, that the appeal from Finland was necessary, although the Finns

received the request to make the appeal too late because the Governments of Norway and Sweden were strongly opposed to the passage of Allied troops across their territory. It is relevant to hear at any rate what the other Scandinavian Governments think about that. Mr Koht, the Foreign Minister of Norway, said on 14th March

The Allies asked Norway whether she was prepared to allow her troops through only when the Soviet Finnish peace talks were already under way

He added

At that time the matter had ceased to be topical

Mainly there has been some delay. Before leaving this question of aid for Finland I would like to ask my right hon. Friend a question because he has very generously offered—and I know the strain upon him must be considerable—to speak again in this Debate. Those who have visited the Finnish Front have, I think, been uniformly of the opinion that powerful reinforcements in the air could have broken the Russian onslaught. The troops of the aggressor and his material were closely packed upon the ground and his planes were wing to wing upon the ice. Never have there been such opportunities. None of the objections raised to the despatch of troops could have stopped our sending squadrons of the Royal Air Force. None of them. Would it not have been worth one month's output of aeroplanes from our factories to have saved the situation? Might I ask my right hon. Friend why if these objections arose to sending one form of aid we could not have sent another—the speediest and perhaps most effective form of aid particularly as the cause was ours?

It was not in their intentions which were wholehearted that the Allies failed. It was not in their appreciation of what was needed nor in their recognition of the opportunity. It was not in their policy, which was deliberate and well conceived nor was it in their preparations for giving effect to that policy. These appeared at any rate as far as land forces were concerned to have been comprehensive. If the Allies failed it was because they were not determined enough and not quick enough in executing their own decision. Either they should have had faith in the plan which they had formulated or they should never have resolved upon it. Britain and France hesitated, the enemy acted and Finland was lost.

To-day the effects in Europe are everywhere apparent. There are moves towards new alignments. My right hon. Friend mentioned one aspect. The war may be static but Hitler and his emissaries are busy. Can we not counteract the accelerating tendency of the neutrals to compound with Germany? Total war must be waged by total means. Are we satisfied that our diplomacy is alert enough, far seeing enough, firm enough and comprehensive enough? What preparatory work was done in

Norway and Sweden and what stress was laid on our moral claim on our economic connection? What assurance did they have that we were capable of acting effectively and were determined to do so? We were dealing here with Powers which have been consistently loyal to the League of Nations and in asking passage for our troops we were asking for no more than the right to discharge our obligations under the Covenant.

The present war began in circumstances which in some respects were less unfavourable than those against which through prudence we had been compelled to prepare. The sudden conclusion of the Nazi Soviet Pact which was a violation by Germany of the anti Comintern Pact repelled from the Reich the sympathies of Italy and Japan. It is evident that Germany sets great store by the rehabilitation of her friendships. My right hon. Friend has speculated upon the meaning of the last meeting of Hitler and Mussolini. It will indeed be an ominous development if those ideologies which were formerly regarded by us as being so sharply distinguished from one another were to find through unchecked German influence and persuasion a common point of contact against the democracies. The Empires of Britain and France are the strongest entities in the world, they are unbeatable. But to carry their cause to victory they must not only be strong, they must show their strength. It is not enough to have a righteous cause. Czecho-Slovakia had a righteous cause. [HON. MEMBERS

You were a member of the Government and What did you do about it?] I should have thought that there would have been no dispute in any part of the House about the righteousness of the Czecho-Slovakian cause. Poland had a righteous cause and Finland had a righteous cause. Let us be convinced in time that

there is nothing to shield liberty anywhere, but the power of those who wish to guard it and secure it.

COLONEL WEDGWOOD (Newcastle under Lyme) The right hon. Gentleman who has just spoken has propounded views which I think, we must take as being not solely his own but those of the Army over which he so recently presided and it is only natural that at this particular juncture of this war there should be many military men with a great desire to do something. The Army has been in every previous war the centre of the picture but up till now it has not been able for very good reasons to play its part. That has inevitably driven military men to look around and see whether there is not some place for fighting on land and some chance of breaking the siege warfare of the Western Front. It is only natural that they should seek these opportunities but I cannot believe that any Staff College man in this country can have supposed this expedition to Finland as a deliberate and well-considered military adventure. It is an amazing idea that in the middle of a war with Hitler we should gratuitously take on another war with Russia. The Crimea was child's play to what is now proposed.

We all went into this war expecting that it would be a very different thing from what it has been. We expected a *Blitzkrieg* a knock out blow, and it is only just beginning to dawn upon us that there is to be no attack on the Western Front and that Hitler is quite as capable of sitting still as we are. We are getting into a siege, partly because of the frightful losses in manhood that the last war brought about, and partly because owing to the magnificent defence of the Finns, it is realised that defence is now far stronger than offence stronger than it was in the last war, particularly when you have time to entrench and turn your trenches into Maginot and Siegfried Lines.

We have to realise that we are faced now after six months of war, with conditions and circumstances completely different from what we anticipated in September last. These changed circumstances need a changed policy. We have also found that all the neutrals are more afraid of Germany than they are of us. All round Germany you have now a defensive belt of neutral States, all with their back doors opening on Germany, all praying that we may win but all afraid that we may lose, and afraid even more of what Germany can do meanwhile. I do not know whether we shall see repeated in Rumania what was done in Finland. I think it is extremely unlikely, because I do not think Rumania would ever have the courage to call upon British troops not because they are not good enough but because the calling in of British troops would bring against them forces more powerful than we could ever end. We have to realise that we have no chance of getting the neutrals bordering on Germany on our side during the war, when the peace conference comes it may be a different thing but during the war you cannot expect it. And it is unnecessary for Germany to conquer or occupy any of these neutral countries. So far as Germany's power is concerned, it depends on threats and fear, and I am certain that they can get as large supplies as they can pay for from any of those neutral countries, and we cannot stop them.

We cannot secure perfect safety in war. We can only give priority of safeties. We must preserve, first, the ability to live and work, otherwise we are finished, and therefore, I ask the Government to cut down first, all home defence which was necessary if there was going to be heavy air fighting or landing by parachutes but which is not worth the money, if we are to have five years of patient siege warfare. As men are recruited for the Army, one group after another, do let us retain the men who can be of use in agriculture, and even more those who can produce in the workshops. This is siege warfare—endurance economics. It will be a long siege, and we shall be able to hold out only by calling upon the people of this country to make sacrifices of which as yet they do not dream. We shall have no income left.

We must insist upon the Government changing their policy to suit the new conditions, or, better still, we must insist upon a

change of government and get a real national effort conducted by people who are believe me quite as capable as the right hon. Gentlemen on the Government Front Bench. The people who are not playing their full part to day are the Labour Party, the Labour Front Bench. We are all thinking that. It is only right that the Labour Front Bench should be taking their full responsibility for the national effort with those now on the Government Front Bench. We have to get the working classes of this country heart and soul behind us. The froth on top does not matter so much. What counts is the people below. It is our people, the working classes who are fighting for their freedom. They will be behind the war until Hitlerism is a thing of the dead past. I want them to take their proper part, making their sacrifices, shouldering their responsibilities, joining with the Liberals and the fighting men opposite and directing the storm. A combined effort is required. We want less of the attempt to show, as the Prime Minister attempted to show in his speech, that we have done all that we could possibly do. What we want from the Government Front Bench and from any Government during this war is not justification of the past but readiness to change to meet new circumstances, and the ability to push through new schemes regardless of vested interests.

MAJOR RAYNER (Totnes). I am rather out of touch with the House, and I rise to speak only because I feel that from across the Channel one obtains a sort of bird's eye view of our national effort a view that is perhaps more detached than any view which it is possible to take at home.

I should like to speak about our national effort. I believe that in spite of the apparent sluggishness of the struggle the British Commonwealth is to day facing the gravest challenge in its history. Our enemies are a grimly efficient race, schooled in hard self sacrifice and enthused with a high fervour for low ideals, and if we are to deal with them faithfully we have to match enthusiasm against enthusiasm, efficiency against efficiency and sacrifice against sacrifice. Whatever Hitler's secret weapon may be his strongest weapon is that blind enthusiasm for the Nazi creed with which he has inoculated so many millions of his young people. That creed is a poor thing, but by using the famous blood theory he has managed to make those young people feel that they are fighting a sort of holy war. We on our side are fighting for our lives and our liberty. But we are doing much more than that—we are the champions of good against evil and the banner of our cause ought to be unfurled from John o Groats to Land's End. Hon. Members must know that to-day there is a widespread feeling of boredom and bewilderment in this country. The war hangs fire and somewhat uninspired communiques have failed to dispel the gloom of long evenings of black-out. There has not been a living contact between responsible government and those who wait and endure at home. To the many war aims seem remote and national purpose obscure. It is a thousand pities that, owing to

our changed circumstances the great recruiting campaign of 1914 could not be carried out in 1939. In those days the speeches of countless public men from Justices of the Peace to Front Benchers in parish rooms and town halls instructed borough and hamlet in what we were fighting for and thus the will of our whole people was given its bearing.

We sadly lack that guidance to day for everything has tended to confuse rather than to clarify the issue. In the early months of the war we were encouraged to regard the German people as the unhappy dupes of a bad man whereas they are members of a race which has brought five aggressive wars to Europe in a long lifetime. They have merely had the lust for conquest revived. Soothing syrup is still doled out from too many public platforms. Madam this of one paper and Professor that of another hand on advice hot from the stars. The ether hums with lies and howls with misleading information. The air is still clogged with the prejudices of an era of apathy and ideological theory. If ever a country needed simple guidance on confusing matters it is this country to day. Is it surprising that one comes back and finds that most of one's friends are mainly interested in finding out how they are to spend the Easter holidays rather than how the war is being conducted and is it surprising to find that there are in this country still people who think that all we have to do to win the war is to sit round Hitlerism until it cracks? I suggest that we need a national campaign to-day.

I feel too that there is a certain lack of guts about our effort. It was perforce started on the wrong note. In the early months we had to concentrate on Air Raid Precautions and on advertising the maxim of Safety First. We had to build up an organisation intended to direct a general stampede to shelter and almost to suggest that the first duty of a citizen at war is to take cover. That did little to wake us up. Our greatness was not built up on safety first and now that we have made proper provision for our women and children we can afford to acknowledge it. There is also a lack of guts about our slogans. I cannot remember one of them in the last war that finger of Lord Kitchener pointing at one from every hoarding touched one right on the solar plexus. That hurt injunction. Your Country needs you made every man want to do his damndest. I do not know whether the long lull is responsible for the failure of inspiration on the part of our inventors of slogans. I should have thought they could have obtained sufficient inspiration from the glorious doings of the Rawalpindi the Ajax the Achilles and the Exeter from the courage of our longshoremen rushing down to man those little ships which trawl for food and sweep for mines and from the marvellous show put up by the Finns. We certainly need better slogans. Our Press too could help enormously. Much of it is the best in the world bits of it one can smell half a mile away but all of it has retained a great measure of *front* in a continent of control. Cannot that veritable

Rotherbrook berry take counsel with himself and sweep off the table with a mighty hand all sales considerations all theories as to what the public wants, so giving us, for the duration a Press worthy of a fight for right?

Then we have to match efficiency against efficiency I must admit that I went a certain distance with the Leader of the Opposition in his speech this afternoon As usual we were caught with only one foot out of bed, and although miracles of organisation have been performed, too much incompetence has been tolerated No doubt when you have a vast bureaucracy, breeding branches like rabbits there is bound to be muddle but many of us in the British Expeditionary Force feel that efficiency is not being insisted upon We feel that even in the splendid peace time Civil Service a man is rarely penalised for his mistakes It is so easy to pass the baby, and when, in the swollen Departments of to day thousands of untrained hands play at "Up, Jenkins!" with thousands of babies, the matter becomes very serious In the war time Defence Services if an officer makes mistakes he is removed and it should be the same in the new Civil Service The movement must start from the top The principle of "sackability" should be driven home in every department After all, sacking is a comparatively mild penalty compared with that which officers in the front line, at sea, and in the air, have to pay They frequently have to atone with their lives for a mistake

I hope that the Committee on National Expenditure is getting busy, because there is much for it to do My experience is very limited but I know that there are a good many directions in which it might make inquiries Economy means efficiency, and there is plenty of scope for the committee in that regard One cannot expect our housewives to save in the home unless they have a better lead than mere exhortations from the B B C They are not impressed by pleas for economy or for meatless days made over the groaning boards of City banquets The lead must come from the top and I should like to see our capital town of London giving a better lead With its crowded dance halls its bottle parties which have almost doubled in number since the war broke out, and its rather feverish West End air of pleasure-seeking it is not setting a very good example to a country which must remain solvent or go under It cannot even claim to be producing light relief for men back from the mud and blood of war, and it does not compare very favourably with its sister capital across the Channel

Paris gives one the impression of a city which has got down to the grim job of winning a long war Its restaurants produce good food, and its cafes are quite reasonably cheerful but by midnight the city is closed and shuttered against another day's intensive preparations for conflict In France most of those things usual in peace time have been set aside in war, and we in this country might learn something from the single minded effort which our Ally is making Finally, we have to match the sacrifices

which the Germans have made for years. I do not propose to labour this point, because the word has become rather hackneyed. We have got rather tired of it, but if this country knows what it is fighting for and what it is up against and if it is sure that efficiency and economy are being insisted upon in every department, then I am quite certain that all classes will shoulder the most crushing sacrifices as a matter of course.

MR R. LAW (Kingston upon Hull South West). I should like to congratulate my hon. and gallant Friend who has just spoken upon his simple, sincere and direct utterances with which, if he will allow me to say so, I find myself in a great deal of agreement. I wish that this Debate could have been conducted in Secret Session, because I feel that things have to be said which for my own part, I would sooner say to the House alone. However, it has seemed good to be otherwise to the usual channels and certainly it may well be that plain speech in the public ear had its value even in times of war. After all, that is one of the things we are fighting for—the right of free men and women to order their own lives, to have their own thoughts and to speak their own minds. I agree that we must be careful not to abuse that right, but there is more than one way of abusing rights, one of which is never to use them. I know that many people feel that plain speaking is a sign of disunity and weakness and is playing into the hands of the enemy. I respect that feeling but I do not share it. For my part I feel that there is one thing that does play into the hands of the enemy, and that is to bury one's head in the sand and expose a great feathered tail to the claws of the tiger. We have given Hitler a great deal of help in that way in the past, and I do not think we should again make the same mistake.

I listened with great interest to the speech of the right hon. Gentleman, the Member for Devonport (Mr. Hore Belisha), but I am not a strategist, not even an amateur strategist and have not sufficient knowledge of the facts on which to base an opinion on his views. However, what I do know and I do not think it requires any knowledge or gifts to know it is that as a result of his transaction we have lost and our enemy has gained greatly in strength. Germany has had a great fear removed from her. The corruption and incompetence of Russia have removed that fear which has haunted her for a long time of the enemy in the East. But the riches of Russia remain for Germany to exploit. No one can say how effective our blockade has been in the past, but I think it must be fairly certain as the right hon. Gentleman, the Member for Devonport has pointed out, that it will be less effective in the future as a result of what has happened. More than all this and all the other ills which flow from this tragic transaction are the moral evils. That principle had been affirmed once again which has been affirmed so often in recent years that it is wiser and more prudent to respect the anger of the tyrant wherever he may be than to trust the good intentions of free men. What has happened in Central Europe and Eastern Europe, and what

has happened now in Scandinavia, is, I believe, going to happen in other parts of the world, unless we nerve ourselves to that supreme moral effort which the right hon. Gentleman the First Lord of the Admiralty once asked for in this House. Unless we make an effort greater than any we have yet made, we shall find ourselves in a position from which it will be first difficult, then more difficult, and finally impossible to recover ourselves.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister this afternoon made, as he always does, an excellent defence of the Government position. He was, if I may say so without impertinence, persuasive and sincere. He convinced himself and very nearly carried conviction to me. I thought that his case was almost unanswerable, but I did not think it was quite unanswerable. If I may convey to the House the impression his speech made on me, I would put it in this way, that throughout the Finnish war the attitude of His Majesty's Government has been absolutely correct. There are two points in the Prime Minister's speech which stick in my mind. The first was when he said that the fact that the requirements of the Finns were changing from moment to moment made meeting those requirements extraordinarily difficult. Of course, that is true, as anyone who is concerned with production knows. What I cannot help wondering is whether the British Government sat like a commercial firm in a busy hectic time waiting for orders to come in, or whether they consulted with the Finnish Government and recommended what arms they were likely to need over a long future and the kind of arms which we could most readily supply. Did we plan production for them or did we sit wait for their orders to come in?

In the last few years I and every hon. Member have witnessed one or other prominent member of the Government—the Prime Minister or the Chancellor of the Exchequer or the Lord Privy Seal—come down to the House and stand at that Box in the midst of the wreckage of some policy or other, in the midst of some defeat or other, and explain that there was nothing that could possibly have been done. That has happened time after time. It happened in the case of Austria, it happened in the case of Czecho-Slovakia, it happened in the case of Poland, and now it has happened in the case of Finland. Each time it happens it makes the next time easier and the next time more likely. . . .

The Prime Minister made, in his speech to-day, a most eloquent appeal to the neutrals. I hope and pray that the neutrals may heed it, but I am sure that the small nations and neutrals would pay more attention to such an appeal if it were directed to them by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Dominions or my right hon. Friend the First Lord of the Admiralty. [HON. MEMBERS: "No."] I know that many of my hon. Friends will not agree with what I say, but the fact remains that to be associated with policies which always end in defeat and frustration does not lend strength to your hand when you tackle new policies from a different angle.

There is a great feeling in the country to-day I believe for the institution of a War Cabinet. I know that there is a War Cabinet but it is not the kind of War Cabinet that existed 25 years ago over which my right hon. Friend the Member for Carnarvon Boroughs (Mr. Lloyd George) presided with some little success. The present Cabinet as I understand it is a fairly large body composed partly of harassed and overburdened departmental Ministers with a sprinkling of civil servants and experts and with the Lord Privy Seal. That is not the kind of body which won the last war. The War Cabinet in those days had four or five men. They remained free from departmental responsibilities. It is commonly agreed that after the War Cabinet on that new system had been instituted there were a drive, leadership and decision that had been lacking before. That was not because they were new men; they were in the main the same men as were there before but because there was a new organ set on and it was fitted to deal with the circumstances which then existed and which I maintain still exist.

I am convinced that the country to-day is not getting the leadership, drive, determination and decision which it deserves. That is a matter not of personalities, but of organisation. I hope and pray that the War Cabinet will be reorganised before it is too late.

MR. RAIKES (Essex, South East). I should like to say a word on one other aspect of the war because it is only on occasions like this that it is possible for private Members to express views in regard to the general war policy and the condition of the home front. I believe this year is the most difficult we shall face in the whole course of the war because this year we are still fighting the war of nerves and while a war of nerves persists there is a danger of boredom increasing upon the home front. I see two dangers because although like other hon. Members I am convinced that we shall win this war I am convinced that we shall not win it by saying we are going to win it. We are up against the biggest proposition that we are ever likely to meet in our lifetime.

There seem to be two dangers. If we are to drift easily along saying that time is on our side that we will stay behind the Maginot Line and encourage our own people to imagine that at any moment Germany may attack then if Germany does not attack, and we have not taken the country sufficiently into our confidence in regard to the period of inactivity we may have to face the possibility of a very depressing feeling next autumn that with all the sacrifices made nothing had been done. There is nothing that frightens me more than the persistent reports generally from Amsterdam or Rotterdam which find their way into the newspapers in this country to the effect that very shortly a great push will be made by Germany—sometimes against Holland sometimes against Belgium sometimes against Switzerland. All these rumours many of which I believe are created deliberately by Germany for the purpose of causing uncertainty here at home,

keep nerves on edge and if nothing does happen the time may come when as I say boredom will increase

That is one danger. Another is that the Government may be pressed—though I believe they will resist the pressure—to try to do something spectacular. I am appalled at times by the sort of articles written in arm chairs by elderly gentlemen to fashionable periodicals urging that we should attack saying that if Germany does not attack us we must take the initiative—take the initiative in the air start bombing take the initiative on the Western Front, and so on. These things cannot be done at the present time. Our task is so far as we can to win this war without a Passchendaele or a Somme if that can be done. If we were in face of the strategic wisdom of the higher command to make some violent gesture in order to please tub thumpers and orators it might very likely lead to a reverse which might shake the very foundations of this country and in the long run, the chance is of France.

SIR DERRICK GUNSTON (Gloucester Thornbury) Does the hon. Member suggest that a reverse in the field like Passchendaele or the Somme would shake the foundations of this nation?

MR. RAIKES I will give the hon. Member his answer. I think that if in face of all the strategic considerations we were to hurl the youth of this country upon the Siegfried Line—[*Interruption*].—My hon. Friend says that nobody is suggesting it and I am not suggesting that any Member of this House has made such a suggestion but many articles have been written that the war must be 'hotted up' and there are only two ways in which it could be 'hotted up'—one is to bomb Germany and the other is to attack the Siegfried Line. I say that if that were done deliberately—I am certain the present Government would not do it—and we were to lose half a million lives in such an onslaught that that would undoubtedly shake the confidence of the country in the wisdom of our leaders and it is on the wisdom of our leaders and on the strength of the home front that we must rely if this war is to be won.

Foreseeing as I do a long war, a war which I think will destroy many of the things which most of us have been brought up to value, a war which may leave long afterwards, its scar and its stain upon this country, I should be almost tempted to urge a negotiated settlement were it not for the fact that I believe we are fighting against the greatest forces of evil which have been known in the world for many years.

MR. HAROLD MACMILLAN (Stockton-on Tees) I do not feel inclined to criticise the Government for their failure to rescue Finland from her fate. At its best this was a hazardous enterprise. Serious geographic and diplomatic obstacles presented themselves and many of the most astute observers predicted that it would be impossible to overcome them. Nor do I think that the Finns are disposed to criticise our inability to

help them more effectively. They fully understood our difficulties in sending an armed force, and they understood our problem in sending them materials of war. After all, much as we must sympathise with the victims of aggression in different parts of the world, we cannot be regarded as universal suppliers of help to distressed peoples. We cannot, alas supply a margin out of our superfluities, but only out of our deficiencies, deficiencies caused to some extent by our own folly in past years.

Perhaps the most damaging criticism of His Majesty's Government is that, having begun to regard the Finnish war as part of the strategic front, they did not move with sufficient rapidity or with sufficient determination into this position, that they hovered between two policies and that at the end of this affair we have by universal consent, obtained a maximum of disadvantage with a minimum of advantage.

The first act was the three months war, a historic struggle which will always command the admiration of the world, not one Thermopylae, but Thermopylae every day. The heroism of the army was matched by the dauntless courage of the civilian population. I will tell the House of a personal experience to illustrate that side of the picture. I was going one day by railway from Jisalmu to a little junction called Riihimäki. This town, typical of many Finnish towns with its timber built houses its paper factory and its timber yard had been heavily bombed during the preceding day by a force of nearly 100 Russian aeroplanes. On the day I reached it it had been continuously bombed again by a force of about equal size. During these two days, something between one quarter and one-third of the town had been destroyed either by fire from the thermite bombs or by explosion. A goods train had been destroyed in the station, and the whole of the station was more or less in ruins. It was a modern concrete building of which they were proud. When I went into the ticket office to find out whether there was any chance of getting a train—I hoped to take one coming from Helsinki—I found that a woman was taking the place of the railway man who had gone to the war. She was perfectly unmoved going on with her work as though nothing had happened. I asked whether it was likely that the train would come and she said she would ring up Helsinki and find out. There was no light except from candles and no water in the town because the water supply had been destroyed. In the most ordinary way in the world she informed me that the train would come in eight hours' time, that is eight hours late, at four o'clock next morning.

I tried through an interpreter to discuss with her how it was that she took everything so calmly, and she gave the rather pathetic reply, "The women of Finland will fight on because they believe that you are coming to help them." They were absolutely unmoved by this attack on the civilian population. I walked through the town to see where I could get a meal of some kind and I found one inn which had not been destroyed.

meal was being served to the troops and to people whose houses had been burnt; and again that was being done without any kind of disorder, in a town about one-third of which had been destroyed and the houses burning or smouldering at the time from that day's bombardment. . . .

Throughout the whole of Finland we learned a lesson for our civilian population. We saw what courage could do to keep things going. Only in two towns, Helsinki and, I think, Tampere, and in no other part of Finland, was there any anti-aircraft defence whatsoever. There were no anti-aircraft guns, Lewis guns or machine-guns. Everything available was being sent to the front. Several towns had, in the course of this period, more than 70 days' bombing, and in Hangö there were two occasions on which air-raid warnings were continuous for four days. Throughout it all, the people remained calm and resolute. It is because one remembers these facts that I am anxious that the decision of the Finnish Government to make peace should in no way be misinterpreted or misunderstood.

There are certain matters which ought to be cleared up at once. I said that the first act of this drama was a three months war. The second act was the peace of Moscow. It may be that in the third act the tide of barbarism now flowing so strongly will begin to ebb, and that Finland will revive, and, in a new world, rebuild her civilisation and her life. It was therefore with particular grief that the friends of Finland observed the statement made by the French Prime Minister, M. Daladier, on 12th March. The *Daily Telegraph* of the next day said :

"Last Thursday he addressed a message to Dr. Holma in which he said: 'For several days we have only been awaiting the appeal of Finland to go to her help with all the means at our disposal. If Finland does not now appeal for the intervention of the Allies, it is evident that the Allies cannot assume, at the end of the war, the least responsibility for a definite settlement of the status of Finland.'"

It would be out of order for me to comment upon the propriety of this statement, which was doubtless inspired by an attempt at a critical moment to force an issue. I hope that His Majesty's Government will find it possible, in concert with the French Government, to issue a definite pronouncement to the effect that while they fully recognise the difficulty of Finland's decision they are by no means disinterested in the ultimate fate of Finland; but rather, that in the event of a victory for the Allies, they will do all in their power to reinstate Finland.

Now I come to the more difficult part of my task. I hope that the House will bear with me in matters of some detail, but apart from that, there are several other misconceptions which ought to be put right. The general public have seen statements, issued by the British radio—I assume with the authority of the Government—on 21st February and by the French Government on 12th March, of the total amount of material supplied to Finland by the Allies.

The public may wonder how it was that with such very substantial amounts of material as are indicated by those figures the Finnish assistance collapsed so suddenly. In his statement of 13th March, the Prime Minister used these words

'The Finnish Government have made repeated requests for materials and every one of these requests has been answered'—
[OFFICIAL REPORT, 13th March 1940 col 1165 Vol 358]

To-day he used practically the same words when he said "No appeal remained unanswered. I do not know in what sense he used the word "answered" and whether he used the word in the sense that the call was answered and the appeal was acceded to. I do not think he can be aware of the actual details. If he meant—

THE PRIME MINISTER I thought I explained clearly that we had not been and were not able to fulfil all the requests which were made to us by Finland. What I said was that we made a response and that we had answered every call meaning to say that, as each call came along we did our best to meet it.

MR MACMILLAN I quite understand that, but I am calling attention to two different phrases used by the Prime Minister, and I want to clear the matter up. On 13th March he said

Every one of those requests has been answered

but to day I think he used the words

"No appeal remained unanswered"

He qualified them with the words

"Every request was considered so far as it was possible"

I think the general impression is that they were not answered in the sense in which a letter is answered but that as a whole, those requests were acceded to. That is a very different picture from the one which was given to me and which I shall try to show presently—by General Walden and the Minister of War when I was in Finland. They gave me the impression of a series of appeals for large quantities of materials, appeals which fell almost entirely at first on deaf ears, and were followed at last by materials which were sent always in too small quantities and always too late. On the question of the material I recognise that there was necessarily great delay between the time of the material leaving England and the time when it could reach the field of battle. We know what difficulties of transport there are to-day to which the Prime Minister referred. But there was almost equal delay between the authorisation of the material by the War Cabinet and the date at which it was actually despatched.

There was some controversy between the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Liberal party as to who had the responsibility for despatch. Our main object was to keep the Finns in being until the Allies could send the expedition. Surely we had the

moral, if not the technical responsibility. We had the best reason, for our own purposes, to do what we could to get this material forwarded. There was also a very long delay in the making of the request by the Finnish Government and in the decision whether to release different kinds of material. The Prime Minister shakes his head. Since we are to have this matter in the open and not in private I feel I must say that I know the facts only as they were told to me. I cannot allege them of my own knowledge. I can give the facts only as they were given to me.

I remember being present at a conference between the Minister for War and General Walden when they showed me in despair a telegram which had come stating that France and England were refusing to make any substantial contribution to the list of materials which the Field Marshal had requested. The Prime Minister has given certain figures; I feel under no obligation to refrain from saying what I feel ought to be said. On a later date 2nd February, the Finnish Minister asked for the release of materials. This letter was not even acknowledged. I have been inquiring about it. It was not acknowledged until the 12th, then the Secretary of State said:

"None of the weapons or munitions which your country requests can be spared from our resources."

That was seven days after the Government had decided to send an expeditionary force to rescue these people. On 9th February, General Enckell presented his list to the C.I.G.S. All these were at the Prime Minister's service. I leave out the list of materials. There are some 15 or 16 items. On 12th February, General Enckell was informed by General Ironside that the British authorities were not in a position to release any of the items for. Again, on the 13th, a further representation was made to the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs. On the 14th, the Finnish Minister was told of a new decision. There was a release of a particular lot of 30 field guns. I do not want to do more than to correct the impression that this large amount of material is in fact due to reach Finland. The public would take that from the announcements that had been made. I want to disabuse the public from that view.

REAR-ADMIRAL SIR MURRAY SUETER (Hertford): On a point of Order. Is it in the public interest that all this detail should be given?

MR. MACMILLAN: I certainly should not give the facts if the Prime Minister had not decided, himself, to deal with this matter in public. So strongly did I feel the situation in 1918 that I ventured as a private citizen to telegraph some suggestions of my own to His Majesty's Government. I got the impression—I could go into much greater detail if the Prime Minister should desire it—that at first there was a considerable delay. The

delay was usually about six weeks between the granting of the release and the actual shipping of the material. The public have read in these announcements in the Press enormous figures of the release of these materials but is it generally known that although 48 aeroplanes were ultimately released—and that is the Prime Minister's figure to-day and he told us quite frankly—only 101 were sent? I am not speaking now of numbers reaching Finland out of numbers leaving England. Is it realised that of these 101 only four left England in December, only 44 in January and only 17 in February and the others were made up in March?

I do not think the general public knows but as the Prime Minister has produced these figures I am entitled to deal with them. Is it generally known that we were unable to send any anti-tank guns at all when the Field Marshal asked for 100? A number of anti-tank rifles were sent and left England about 28th February. No one could be quite sure when they would arrive but they were surely sent very late. We could only send 25 howitzers out of the 150 asked for, only 30 field guns out of 166 asked for and these were despatched one month after the request. When we come to small arms ammunition that is one of the most curious cases that has happened. Here again it is important that actual figures should not be mentioned. The Finnish Government were in the habit of placing large orders for certain cartridge caps with English manufacturers. An order due to have been released as I understand it somewhere about June was by the courtesy of the Finnish War Office and not as a matter of right postponed before the war began. (At that time the Order in Council did not apply.) When the war started the Finnish Government said: At least send us this material which we ought to have had in June. What handicapped them so terribly was that they only received half of that and of the further larger release which was asked for none of the cartridges left before the war began.

SIR PATRICK HANNON (Birmingham Moseley). On a point of Order. Will not the Germans make use of this in the interests of their country? Is not the contribution which the hon. member is making to the House a positive danger to the safety of our Empire?

is one other point which the British public ought to know. I am making not the slightest accusation against His Majesty's Government, but there is general talk in the Press about the generosity of the Allies in parting with their war material. The generosity, course, consisted in allowing the material to be sent at all in time of war and not in the terms on which it was sent. In two cases—I think of certain aeroplanes—these were gifts, and generous gifts, and nothing was asked in payment except the packing and delivery costs. In all the other cases payment was made either in cash, or under the Export Credits scheme—that is to say, 15 per cent. in cash on delivery, and the rest in bills over a period of years carrying an interest of 4 per cent. When we remember that Finland is the only country that has not defaulted upon its debts and, unlike this country, continued to pay interest on her American debt, her credit was pretty high, and although I recognise that no official statement has ever been made with a contrary suggestion, I doubt whether the general public recognises that with the exception of two cases the whole of this war material was sold to the Finns on an ordinary commercial basis. It may be said that the true reason for this procedure was that it was advisable that this material should become Finnish property in London, in order to facilitate its movement through Scandinavia. That, however, would equally apply to the part of the materials which was a gift. It would become Finnish property by gift or purchase, so that that point is not vital.

I will leave the question of materials, and come to that of men. I think nobody can quarrel, certainly I would not, with the Prime Minister's general account of the situation as it appeared to the Field Marshal. But it is perfectly true that he needed men. He said, "I receive everything—ambulances, field kitchens, even guns and aeroplanes, but never bayonets." The need for men was imperative. Whether our forces could ever have played an effective part until the period after the thaw, I frankly rather doubt. The British Government gave official recognition to the right to raise volunteers on the part of a very hard-working and very fine body of people in this country, who did what they could, and that was not easy. I think the chief importance of a volunteer force from England was that it was a kind of token that England and other countries would allow volunteers to go there, that it was helpful to the civilian population in particular, and that it was thought it might stimulate other neutral countries also to raise volunteer forces. Nevertheless, the whole point of the position in regard to men was that with only a few extra men they could have held on until the thaw. If you could have got them there, another week might have made the whole difference. The whole point was, not that a great number of men should be brought there rapidly, but that perhaps a few would have taken the place of others in a quiet section of the line, and would thus have allowed men to be transferred to the Isthmus when the troops there had become so tragically overburdened. The purpose was to hold the

main position and to gain a period of respite. After that a force of two or three divisions might have been sufficient to win the war. That being so, it made all the greater importance to a supply of material if we really meant to carry out the decisions of the Bologne Conference, and it was absolutely vital to get material there and to get this plan to work. It is not fair to say that the Finnish Army fell for any other reason except that of exhaustion coupled with the fact that in many parts of the sector there was nothing with which to fire back at the advancing enemy. It was only then, after these long delays, with the feelings of uncertainty which the whole of Finland felt, not knowing what was going to happen, it was only then that, worn out by fatigue and with a sense of despondency, that lion hearted man the Field Marshal thought it wiser to accept the inevitable end. One of the reasons and it is a lesson for the future, was connected with our representation there. Is it fair to have started a war with a system by which one military attache representing us is appointed for four countries—Norway, Denmark, Sweden, and Finland? Had a mission similar to the Milner Mission gone to Finland, with powerful political representation and with a lieutenant general and a Staff of high rank, to whom the Field Marshal could have spoken and who would have carried weight, it would have made a great difference.

I come to the last thing which is equally unfair to Finland. This misconception has been largely cleared up from what it was a week ago by the disclosures that have since been made. I think the general public should re-read the Prime Minister's statement on Monday, 11th March and that of M. Daladier on Tuesday. I do not make any accusation of any kind, but they will have got the impression that all the Finns had to do was to make a formal demand, and that immediately a large expeditionary force of 100,000 men or so would sail to their aid. The public believed that Finland had only to make the request and the expeditionary force would sail. "Why, then," said the public, "after so much heroism, was this wavering? Was it treachery or collapse of morale?" (I have heard that suggested.) What were the reasons? Were they sound, understandable reasons or were they sinister? But, Sir, this is much too crude a view of the situation. Early last week Finland was not in the position of a man with a large cheque duly signed which he had only to endorse and pay into the bank. It was not so simple as that. The question was this—if he endorsed the cheque and paid it in, would it be returned "Refer to drawer" by the Scandinavian banks?

This expeditionary force was authorised on 5th February, two months after the beginning of the war, but the Finnish Government were only asked to make their formal application for help on 25th February, when the position in the Isthmus battle was rapidly deteriorating perhaps beyond repair. If this force was too late its arrival was also too uncertain, since there was always the overriding condition as I understand it, that the neutrality of Sweden and Norway should not be violated. Therefore, and I

think the Prime Minister would agree it is a fair statement to say that if the Scandinavian Governments persisted in their objections the only hope was that a wave of emotion would be created sufficient to change the decision of those governments or change governments themselves by a popular move. Therefore it is true to say that the Finns only had to ask for assistance to get it. They had to ask for it and then if a situation was created in Scandinavia which made it possible to go then and then only, would the Allies come to their aid. They had to make the request and estimate their chance of this great change taking place. By that time I think they had their own methods of assessing it. They also had other great pressure brought upon them as the Prime Minister has told us and I am glad he spoke so firmly. They were not sure if they tried to operate the scheme that even the material in transit would be allowed to go on. It was suggested by Germany that if they persisted they might not get the Frontier of 1721 but of 1808 and be wholly absorbed by Russia. The lack of material made it almost certain that, even if the force sailed it could not have arrived in time. That was the situation they had to deal with last week and I think, if anyone makes a fair judgment the only possible decision is that the Government took the right course. I think therefore it is only right that the lustre of their fame should not be dimmed by malice or misunderstanding.

As to the general lessons of this episode I do not know enough of the strategy of war to know whether on the whole we have gained or lost. It can obviously be argued that this expeditionary force might have succeeded brilliantly. On the other hand it might have failed disastrously. Nor can I appraise the effect of this episode upon the duration of the war. It would be foolish to try to do so. But it does I think throw a piercing light on the present machinery and the method of government. The delay, the vacillation, changes of front, standing on one foot one day and on the other the next before a decision is given—these are patently clear to anyone. The moral of the history of these three months to be drawn for the future is to use the phrase of Burke—a proof of the irresistible operation of feeble council. We have been at war for six months. The war may flare up at any moment into a violent battle or it may continue in the present stage where like two boxers in the ring the giant nations are watching each other, feinting but afraid to strike. It may be a war of siege or a war of rapid movement. In either case we shall require the maximum of courage and resolution. Much has been learnt that we may use for our benefit from this Finnish episode. Let us apply it for our own safety and may we hope for the ultimate good of that little country whose military prowess and civilian courage have won the admiration of the world.

BRIGADIER GENERAL SIR HENRY CROFT (Bournemouth)
I have listened to nearly every word of the Debate and I cannot

understand some of the criticisms which have been forthcoming I can understand the criticism that we ought not to have touched the Finnish question with a barge pole. There are some who say that whatever we do, we ought not to engage in any fresh peril outside. I can also understand the position of those who say we ought to have endeavoured by every means in our power to go in full bloodedly, but I cannot understand the kind of criticism in which both those arguments are used. I agree that it is extraordinarily difficult for us to sum up the strategic possibilities of the situation in which we found ourselves.

I think, however, my hon. Friend did not stress sufficiently the extraordinary difficulty in war time of moving any material at all even with the good will of the Government. To suggest that it was possible to send material to Finland speedily is unfair. I never imagined that the Government had gone to the lengths which the Prime Minister has indicated. Everything was certainly done in order that we should make our maximum contribution if the diplomatic situation rendered it possible to do anything at all.

There are, possibly, two schools of thought on this question and where I think any critic of the Government must come out into the open. Are those who think that the Government failed, of opinion that we ought to force the issue with the Scandinavian Powers? They did not say so; they avoided that point altogether. It is no good saying their support of Finland was conditional. Of course it was conditional unless we were prepared to say that we were ruthlessly to go through Scandinavia—not an easy military adventure in a hostile country. Did any critic really imagine that that was possible? However great the strategic advantage might have been to us in the long run, could we, in order to uphold the law of nations and resist aggression, have taken a course such as that? I think not. I now want to deal with the future. Has the time not come when we in this country should make a distinction between those countries which are neutral in the sense of the word which we always understood in the past, and those countries which are endeavouring to help the aggressor and, I might almost say, sustaining the aggressor in a lengthy war?

MR BUCHANAN. Why not say what you mean?

SIR H CROFT. I am going to say what I mean. For many years we have had the greatest friendship and perhaps a special affection for the people of Scandinavia. Throughout the lengthy discussions on foreign affairs the Scandinavian Powers have been quoted to us again and again, as those members of the League of Nations which, above all others, believe in collective security. I do not think that is unfair, in fact I have heard it often said. "Oh, but there are the Scandinavian Powers, those great democracies." Distance lends enchantment, however, and when the tragedy occurs at one's very gates it is a different matter. In

the case of Italy, we saw every small country contiguous to her back out from the collective ideal. So, unfortunately, we find in Scandinavia. We are bound to point out to the neutral countries that here we are really fighting for those ideals to which they have vocally subscribed in days gone by. Risks there must be to the smaller countries, but when you see those smaller countries actually sustaining Germany with the one essential commodity with which she can pursue a long war, namely, iron ore, and when you see it is being conveyed through Sweden into Norway and overland on a Norwegian railway and then brought down over 400 miles of sea coast under the protection of the Norwegian flag, the time has come when we should say that we do not regard that as fighting for collective security against aggression. We should also remind them that all through this war, with perhaps one exception, we have endeavoured to be scrupulously fair on the grounds of neutrality, and we should invite them to consider whether a country can really be opposed to aggression and within the collective ideal while at the same time sustaining the greatest enemy of freedom in the world, namely, Germany, by supplying her with munitions of war.

MR. VERNON BARTLETT (Bridgwater): It seems to me that the hon. and gallant Gentleman has enunciated a very dangerous doctrine, although I have a certain amount of sympathy with it. Where would he stand, for example, with regard to Italy itself?

SIR H. CROFT: I do not want to range all round the world [*Interruption.*] Since the hon. Gentleman has asked me, I think he is entitled to an answer. Surely the answer is this: If in our fight for civilisation we found Italy, Scandinavia or any other Power providing our enemies with vital munition supplies, we ought to regard them as being on a different plane from those countries which are absolutely neutral. Has not the time now come when all these neutral countries, in the spirit of their pre-war utterances, should agree to a certain date on which to cease trading with a country which is bringing the whole of this world to ruin? If they agree to that course they naturally run the risk of being engaged in war, but why cannot they all say that on a certain date they will cease, together, to sustain their enemy with munitions of war and that on that date they will be prepared to make a common defensive front? I suggest that this idea should be thrown out to them because I do not believe that all the spirit of the League of Nations has really gone. . . .

If anyone thinks that the neutral nations will survive this war by standing independently, he is making a great mistake. The time has come to send out a call to all who are seriously opposed to aggression. We should lift the whole question above personal or party considerations. [*Interruption.*] I hope I was not saying anything offensive.

I feel that the time has come when we should look at a new aspect of this question. I cannot believe that it is consistent with absolute neutrality for small countries to continue to provide munitions of war to our enemies on such a large scale, or that if they do so, they can expect to be treated with special consideration themselves. I think we should send a message ringing through the world even at this late hour, to ask all those countries which are willing to stand against aggression to stand together. I believe that, even now, such action would prevent that spreading of the war which the hon. Gentleman above the Gangway fears. I find myself in agreement with those who say that we should have no stone unturned in order to prosecute this war with a vigour that we have not yet shown. If we study the records of the Debates in this House in recent months, we shall see that we have been concentrating on minor things. Our whole energies now ought to be concentrated on our air power, engineering power and munitions power, but we treat these things so lightly. Forgive me if I speak warmly, but I have lived in the hell of modern war, never knowing in the morning whether I should last out the day. Let us not spare any effort in seeing that our equipment is perfect, so that when the blast comes we shall be able to meet it. . .

criticisms of that sort are made they shall be debated in the House of Commons and that we shall show that our belief in our institutions is strong enough for us to admit when those institutions do not work very well

I will not express any views on the military aspect of Finland as I am not competent to do so but I feel that there are two points which have not been sufficiently emphasised. I believe that Germany is still a greater loser than we are as a result of this Finnish Russian treaty. Germany which has always feared the advance of Russia in the Baltic now finds that Russia is not confined to Leningrad and the small territory around it but controls the whole of the Eastern Baltic. I cannot believe that however close the alliance between Hitler and Stalin Hitler in those early morning hours when he finds it difficult to sleep is very pleased with the result of this war in Finland.

Personally I feel that it is a very good thing in one way that this war did not go on because we should inevitably have found ourselves at war with Russia and whatever one's ideological views may be we already have a big enough job on hand to defeat Germany. Also if we had taken on Russia as well we should have had two handicaps. Russia is far too big a country to be easily defeated especially in view of the fact that all her industrial areas are a long way from the frontier. We might have found ourselves involved in a very long and disastrous war. There is the other point, which, I believe is under-estimated sometimes by hon. Members on the opposite side of the House and that is that a war with Russia would have tended to divide public opinion in this country much more than is always realised. Those of us who call ourselves progressives and who as progressives want to see this war carried through with the greatest of energy because we want to see the destruction of the barbarism of Hitler's regime, are being constantly assured that the main aim of the Government is to switch the war over from Germany to Russia. I do not believe that that is true at all but there is no doubt that there is a widespread feeling and a much more widespread feeling than is realised on the Government benches. I believe that the Prime Minister would be quite shocked if he knew the number of letters which I have received in my own small way because I want to see the war prosecuted with more energy telling me that I have become the Prime Minister's devoted supporter or his paid hack. Neither of these rumours is true.

I would like to say a word about the political side. We have all had to admit that politically this affair is a serious defeat. It means that temporarily at any rate a great many neutral countries will be prepared rather to negotiate a surrender to Hitler than to run the risk of their territories being turned into a battlefield. There is no doubt that they all desperately want us to win but I am afraid that our record in the past few months in this Finnish Russian affair is not as good as it ought to be if we want them to come in and help us to win. When the war broke out a little over six

months ago, it was clear that we could not take the military initiative, but we had in our hands very important political and economic cards. I cannot really feel that we have played these cards at all well. The result is that the situation, as it is to day, will bring us back to the Western front, and I want to make an appeal to the Government on this point.

Either, within the next few weeks, Hitler will carry out his lightning war, or *Blitzkrieg*, or we shall continue what I might call the *Sitzkrieg*, which involves sitting down and waiting for something to happen. In the first case, we have to admit that the other side would have an advantage, because, if they began invading Belgium, they would do so before we could send a soldier across the Franco Belgian frontier. It is just possible that the Germans might try to break through during the next few weeks.

In that connection I would venture making a suggestion. The other day in Paris I met several members of the French Government who were very urgent in their requests that, if possible we should send over some of our troops to France to finish their training on French soil, the arguments being that their presence there would be a direct denial of the German assertion that we wanted to fight to the last Frenchman, that it would be easier to feed these troops on French soil and less of a strain upon our shipping, and that, supposing Hitler made a great offensive by invading Belgium or Holland, or both, at any rate we would have some more soldiers ready to help to hold up the advance. Obviously, if that attack were made, it would be accompanied by a tremendous effort to prevent any shipping leaving our coast with reinforcements.

If the stalemate continues, it is obvious that we shall have to do more to keep the public interest. Several hon. Members have talked about that to-night. We have to do much more to make the war dramatic. Why do we always leave the headlines to Mussolini and Hitler?

We must not underestimate the strain upon the ordinary people in this country, and not only in this country, but upon the soldiers at the front. I had the privilege the other day of visiting the French Front Line, and I went up three and a half miles in front of the French Front Line to an advanced post in No Man's Land. You get up there and find twenty men in a little group of trenches, with orders not to fire except in moments of great danger, with the definite knowledge that night after night, and sometimes day after day, enemy patrols are active between them and their front line, the foremost French post being perhaps half a mile away and the nearest German post 200 yards. Men in that situation—and the same is happening on the British Front—have a great deal of leisure for reflection. They have lost their jobs, and have taken on this great effort. At present their morale is very high. I think the response of the people in France has been the most miraculous thing I have known for a long time. The response of our own people has been magnificent, too, but we must do everything we

can to defeat this weapon of boredom. I do not want to sound dramatic, but I believe that unless you do, sooner or later, defeat this boredom, the Armies may get thoroughly tired of the whole thing and say they are going home. If they do that, then heaven help those men in this country whose lack of courage and ideals has allowed such magnificent and generous indignation against bullies to turn into bitterness and despair.

COMMANDER KING-HALL (Ormskirk) : I have listened since four o'clock to the speeches made in this Debate, and they have left me with two conclusions : firstly, that the Government were sincerely anxious and desirous of giving assistance to Finland in this struggle, so much so that as soon as it began to dawn upon them that the situation was getting really serious, they were apparently ready to embark upon an expedition which, I am bound to say, appears to me to have been one which might have become one of the most dangerous and hazardous operations ever undertaken in the course of our history.

The second conclusion to which I have come is that whereas the will was there, I am left with the impression that there was a good deal of inefficiency and indecision as to how that help was to be given. I recognise, of course, that we have not heard the end of the Debate, so that there may be an answer to the various questions which must be disturbing people on this ground of the efficiency of the machine in preparing assistance to Finland. I have information, which I need not mention to the House, which points along the same lines, and I must say that the indecision and a certain amount of "shilly-shally" which was shown is not necessarily only in evidence on this particular matter of giving assistance to Finland. I think it is not yet sufficiently understood that success in war, or for that matter any other enterprise, depends upon getting right the distribution of functions. In war the penalties of failure are so terrible that it is imperative to get the functions clearly defined. Success in war absolutely depends on clear distinctions being made in people's minds between the functions of administration and operations. You must keep quite separate the business of supply and providing things from the

trying to procure things and filling up their store rooms over which might stand the slogan 'More of everything'. There is a danger of materialism running mad. One does not get the same impression of efficient, intelligent and continuous thought being given to the question of how to use the tanks, battleships, munitions and aircraft, of how these resources are to be brought together and directed towards the fulfilment of our objectives. In the short time I have been here listening to Debates in this House I have sometimes likened the Front Bench to a battle fleet. I do not mean the present moment because the anchorage is somewhat deserted. I presume the capital ships are now refuelling. As I have looked at the Front Bench in action it seems to me that I have seen on it one battleship heavily armoured which although laid down seventy-one years ago has been fitted with modern improvements and well degaussed against the magnetic mines which are in the way. I wish we had more battleships of that type. The Prime Minister gives me the impression of having a resolute grip on things and it shocks me to hear the way when anything goes wrong people turn round and tell him that he must take up such things as the coal shortage.

Near the battleship I seem to detect one battle cruiser not exactly a streamlined vessel but a formidable ship which delivers powerful broadsides against the Nazis. But when I look at the rest I am bound to say that the picture is not quite so impressive. [An HON. MEMBER: Drifters.] I was coming to that in a moment. I see this battleship and battle cruiser surrounded by drifters, trawlers, dredgers, and other auxiliary vessels all having their useful functions to perform in war but not designed by God or man to lie in the line of battle.

The Prime Minister at a Guildhall meeting said that no personalities should be allowed to stand in the way of winning the war, and I think it is one's duty to say quite frankly that the present War Cabinet has not got the drive and decision which I think it should have if we are going to get out of this war in the way which everybody believes and hopes and wills that we shall.

MR GALLACHER (Fife West): Let us consider the attitude adopted towards Finland and Russia, in relation to the attitude adopted towards Czecho-Slovakia and Germany. In the month of March last year the Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Food made a statement in the country that the Prime Minister would not lift a finger on behalf of Czecho-Slovakia. We were told in the House that this was an indiscretion but we found out afterwards that it followed a statement of the Prime Minister's at Cliveden House that the Sudetenland should be handed over to Germany. With the Sudetenland to be handed over and Czecho-Slovakia betrayed in this way what did the Prime Minister say? He said to Czecho-Slovakia "Hand over this territory to Germany. If you resist and war follows we will hold you responsible." That was the

attitude then but when we come to the question of Russia we find the hatred felt by the Prime Minister and the Government dominating the policy of this country. The hon. Member for South West Hull (Mr. Law) said that owing to the and inefficiency of Russia Germany was free on her Eastern front. I do not know how he had the temerity to come to this House and make such a statement. He ought to have said that owing to the corruption of the British and French Governments Germany was free on her Eastern front. If the Prime Minister or the Under Secretary is prepared to deny that why have the Government not published a White Paper on the negotiations with Russia? If the proposals of Russia had been accepted there would have been no war. [Interruption.] If the Under Secretary of State denies it then let the Government publish the White Paper.

SIR A. SOUTHBY: What a shame.

MR. GALLACHER: If I had been for sale——

SIR A. SOUTHBY: Nobody would buy the hon. Member. He would not even get a bid.

MR. GALLACHER: Ask the right hon. Gentleman the Member for Carnarvon Boroughs (Mr. Lloyd George). During the last war if the hon. Member for Dumbarton Burghs (Mr. Kirkwood) myself and others had been for sale was the money there? The right hon. Member for Carnarvon Boroughs can prove that what I say is true. Here to night we have heard much criticism of this Government by those who want the war prosecuted. I am glad that Scandinavia has been saved from the horrors of war. I am glad that the war has not been spread. For I consider that it would be the most ghastly calamity that ever took place if a Government of this kind was to drive the people of this country into a war with the great Socialist country the Soviet Union. More and more the masses of the workers are opposed to the further continuation of war for they can see nothing but disaster in it. Therefore some of us at any rate have demanded that the working class movement must use all its power to get rid of this Government bring it to an end and bring the war to an end and bring about in Europe a unity of the people that will ensure a lasting peace from which we can emerge to a new and better life.

COMMANDER SIR ARCHIBALD SOUTHBY (Epsom): I should like to deal with a point about which I do not think any hon. Member has spoken during this Debate. The world to day is full of rumours of peace—rumours put about no doubt, by Nazi propagandists for purposes of their own. It is all part of the war of nerves which is becoming exceedingly difficult for

us to counter. But let us remember that this war has proved that Nazism and Communism are blood brothers under the skin, and it has also proved that the bolt of both Nazism and Communism has been shot. They destroy, but they never build. The limit of Communism has been reached in Russia, the limit of Nazism has been reached in Germany.

Italy looms very largely in the public mind at the present time, but because of the lessons of history it seems to me that we might do well to consider that Italy is unlikely to come down on the side of Germany. Owing to her geographical position she is particularly susceptible to the influence of sea power. Only in the event of a complete defeat of this country and France by Germany, and the domination of the sea by Germany, would Italy fall definitely under the complete influence of Germany and I think there is no doubt that Italian statesmen realise that fact perhaps even better than we do ourselves. There are those who consider that this alliance between Russia and Germany makes the war more difficult to win, makes the result more doubtful. I do not believe it. Germany has proved herself to be completely unreliable, as far as keeping her word is concerned. Russia since the revolution has lied and betrayed every canon of decency, and it does not seem to me that if two blackguards get together they are likely to be reliable partners one to the other. It may well be that before very long too the thieves may fall out.

I do not agree with those who see in this meeting on the Brenner between Hitler and Mussolini, over trumpeted as it has been in our Press, something which is to the advantage of Germany. It may be that, to use a colloquial phrase, Hitler has got the wind up after the failure of his Ambassador to come to an understanding in Rome. I do not believe that the result of the meeting of those two men on the Brenner is any more likely to be against us than in our favour.

It has been suggested by the hon. and gallant Member for Bournemouth (Sir H. Croft) that we should put pressure on the neutrals. I think it may well be that we shall have to do as we did in the last war and ultimately ration the neutrals if we find that they are re-exporting to Germany. But I also believe that more flies are caught with treacle than ever were caught with vinegar, and you can win the neutrals by trying to understand their difficulties rather than by brandishing a big stick in their faces. It may well be that, as in the case of the *Altmark*, there may come times when our patience and toleration will be strained and when we have to take action, but it is better to do as we have done in negotiating with Italy about coal to negotiate an agreement with reason and common sense for that leaves no bitter feelings behind. By that means we shall gain the confidence and respect of the neutrals and we are more likely to get them on our side in our stand against Germany.

Mr A. EDWARDS (Middlesbrough, East). The hon. and gallant Member for Bournemouth (Sir H. Croft) tried, as the

Prime Minister did earlier in the day to make an impression on the neutrals. He said that neutrals should be forced to see that they are following a dangerous policy in what he called trading with the enemy. It is no use the Prime Minister piously saying that we are fighting for small nations against evil. It has been evil all along in recent years for the British Empire to sell materials to Germany which we knew would come back to our own discomfort.

I would allow the past to be forgotten if we could be sure that the Government were courageously looking at the present. I asked a question last week about raw materials being supplied to Japan the inventor of aggression. Australia at this time when we are told we have to dig up tramway lines is supplying vast quantities of scrap iron and steel to Japan. Why does that not come to this country? The Dominions Secretary says that he has no control. Of course, we have no control over Australia but we can use a great deal of influence. Are the Government to sit quiet and watch this vast quantity of material going from Australia to Japan? There were 1 000 000 tons last year, and I believe that several thousand tons a month are still going, while Australia is sending men here to fight for the Empire. Will not somebody in the Government do something about it? One would not be so anxious if one could be sure of a little more co-ordination at home. In a discussion last week with an important official in one of our Departments about the holding up of production, I said, 'Ought not this to be submitted to the Minister for the Co-ordination of Defence?' He nearly collapsed, he hardly knew what it meant or who the Minister was.

I listened to the Prime Minister's speech with great interest. I cannot think that a man determined to fight this war with 100 per cent of effort and determined to choose men on their merits, would tolerate for two days the men who have run the Ministry of Transport and the Ministry of Mines in the last few months. If anybody can make such a ghastly failure of a job as those two men have done and still remain in office it makes one deeply suspicious that the Prime Minister wants 'Yes men' round him—just mediocrity. The country is deeply concerned about what is going on.

No one could listen to the Debate last night without feeling that the proportion of shipbuilding capacity devoted to the output of merchant shipping on which everything depends now is very much less than it ought to be.

MR DALTON (Bishop Auckland) Let me speak of the economic side of the war and offer four propositions to the House which I do not think can be refuted, and if they cannot be refuted then let us draw conclusions from them in due course. My primary purpose is not to draw conclusions but to make statements of fact which I do not think can be denied. First,

there is no military activity on a large scale in this war at present, and therefore there is no using up of German war supplies. That point has been made already by, I think a right hon Gentleman below the Gangway earlier this afternoon. On the contrary those supplies are being constantly increased both through the activities of Germany in her own domestic production and through imports in spite of our blockade. I say, bluntly, that if this state of affairs continues, there is no way in which we can win the war. Germany, in this condition of affairs, can hold out indefinitely, and our own morale unless it is properly sustained and instructed by Ministers may not even outlast that of the slave population under Hitler's rule in a long sit down war.

My second point is that our blockade is much less complete than the blockade in the last war. There is a much greater entry of goods into Germany from a number of contiguous neutral countries both goods of their own production and what they are still permitted by us to import from farther afield. The third proposition I make is that the German civilian's standard of life has been screwed down by Hitler and his gang to a much lower level than ours and much lower than it was in Germany at the corresponding period in the last war, and therefore since the slaves are given not much more than will keep them alive there is in Germany a large saving and storing of foodstuffs and materials of all kinds and that also makes for the prolongation of a sit down war. Fourthly, the internal regime in Germany is far more ruthless and efficient than it was in the last war. It crushes all opposition, stifles all discontent, and hides all truth, with more brutality and more effect than in the last war.

If these four propositions are accepted, and I think they must be, I suggest that they give us very serious ground for thought as to how, in spite of the situation that I have been describing we can draw victory within a reasonable time from the military and the economic situation. For the reasons I have stated there is no acute shortage in Germany now of any essential for waging war. As to oil, she has her own plants for making oil from coal, a process in which she is far ahead of us. She has been producing oil in that way for years, while our Government has done nothing about it, in spite of our appeals. The Germans can produce a great quantity of oil from their own coal. They also get oil from Rumania and Russia according to the transport facilities available, and as these transport facilities increase, unless we take action to divert supplies to ourselves the German supplies will continually be reinforced. As to fats they are still getting a lot of fats from the Balkans. There are lots of pigs in the Balkans which the Ministry of Economic Warfare would like to buy, but which the Treasury will not allow them to buy. In other directions the Germans are being allowed to draw from the Balkans much material which is of value for feeding men and feeding the war machine.

Regarding iron and steel, the point has already been made

that they are dependent upon Sweden for iron ore, and that rail a matter to which I will return in a moment, namely, the way which Germany has been supplying herself, at the time when Gulf of Bothnia is frozen, with iron ore supplies through an abuse of Norwegian territorial waters. The Government have allowed that to go on. The result is that Germany is pretty well off, so we are informed, for iron and steel. Next there are textiles. As regards natural supplies of material—as distinct from their synthetic production, in which they are very skilful and to which they have devoted much scientific effort, and of which all the time they are increasing their production—natural supplies in great quantities are being allowed to come in from the United States through neutral countries.

The Minister of Economic Warfare, no doubt desirous of waging economic war against those cotton imports, was stopped by somebody or other at the Foreign Office or the Treasury, the result being the figures given by the Minister regarding the cotton imports into Germany. I do not want to quote a lot of figures, but I would draw the attention of hon. Members to a Question by my hon. Friend the Member for Romford (Mr. Parker), and to the reply which was given. On 14th March my hon. Friend asked:

“the value of cotton exported by the United States of America to Russia, Germany and the European neutral countries since the beginning of the war, compared with the figures for the corresponding pre-war period?”

A number of figures were given, but the most notable and most sensational increases are to Belgium, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden and Switzerland, all neutrals contiguous to Germany. The increases are quite out of proportion to any plausible case that the neutrals might put up, that the material was for their own requirements. It is therefore clear that the blockade is quite ineffective, as far as cotton imports are concerned, but this has been allowed to go on, and we wonder where it will stop.

Then there is the position regarding certain metals, such as copper, nickel, chromium and tin. Great quantities are coming in through Vladivostok. This was admitted last night by the Minister of Economic Warfare. I may say, in passing, that I mentioned to the Minister that I should refer to-day to these matters, and that we should expect something to be said about them. The Minister himself admitted in the Debate on the Adjournment Motion last night, which was initiated by the hon. and gallant Member for The Wrekin (Colonel Baldwin-Webb), that they are pouring in along the Trans-Siberian Railway. But for that leak, serious shortages might soon develop in Germany, on condition that military operations on a substantial scale had to eat up Germany's reserves. At the moment, the Germans are getting the best of both worlds in not having to use what they have,

and in getting a lot more by the Trans-Siberian Railway. They get also manganese from within Russia itself

What general comment does one pass on the state of affairs which I have been endeavouring to summarise? It looks to me as though we are much too gentlemanly, too slow-witted and too traditional in the conduct of this war. Hitler is not gentlemanly, nor slow-witted nor traditional. He is making circles round us in the management of the economic side of the war. Much has been said about international law. Germany breaks all the rules of international law, especially at sea. In what I say I choose my words deliberately. I do not pretend to be an expert in these matters. I have, in fact, consulted more than one international lawyer, and I say that, neither in law nor in morality, has Germany the right to invoke any rule of international law against anything we do to her. The question of neutrals is quite another matter. It is often said that those who come to the law must come with clean hands. Germany comes with her hands dripping with the blood of our seamen and the seamen of other countries. I am told, for the benefit of those who desire to clothe commonsense precepts in formal language, that any action that we may take against Germany, in order to put a stop to her supplies, whether through neutral or any other channel, by land or sea, or for stopping her exports can be justified—in the terminology of international law textbooks—according to the doctrine of reprisals. It should be perfectly understood that any German appeal to international law is a piece of impudence and should be disregarded, so far as Germany is concerned.

I turn to the neutrals who are naturally in a different position. They have their proper rights which must be respected. But we are entitled to ask from all of them, whether they be great or small, near or far, that they should, at least, act as neutrals while preserving the right to trade with both sides. That, after all, is the definition of a neutral. It is a country whose citizens, when a war is proceeding, retain the right to make profit by trading with both parties. While I recognise this traditional neutral right, I think we should make sure that the neutrals are not so acting as to favour Germany as against our Allies and friends, and so to prolong the war. If we find that any neutral is acting in that way, we should have a right to consider whether some neutral rights ought not to be brought into debate.

I suggest that in certain directions we have been outwitted and out-distanced by Hitler. This is clearly the case with regard to intervention in the internal affairs of certain neutral countries. Take Rumania. We have noted in the past few days the return of a number of persons, many of them with criminal records, who had been harboured by Hitler. They are described as belonging to the so-called Iron Guard and they have been returning in swarms to Rumania in the last few days. These events are most displeasing to the friends of Rumania in this country. I hope that I may be regarded as one of them. Some of us have been most anxious to

see Rumania protected against aggression. She is indeed guaranteed by this country against aggression. Many of us have believed that Rumania would not leave our side for the side of our enemies in this war and we find most displeasing the recent events that have been taking place. We suggest that the Government should adopt a watchful and realistic attitude both here and elsewhere in the Balkans and should in future distinguish on the basis of the facts alone between those who are and those who are not our friends and should draw the necessary conclusions in their relationships with these countries.

I turn for a moment to Norway. It is true to say that few acts in this war have been more loudly applauded and widely approved than the action of the British Navy in regard to the 'Altmark'. In the recent by election in Silvertown my hon. Friend who now represents that constituency was supported on the platform by several men who had returned from the 'Altmark' and who were able to tell the electors of Silvertown of the experiences through which they had passed. That operation singed no hair on the head of any neutral and it did not harm directly or indirectly, any neutral but it put an end to a gross abuse by Germany of Norwegian territorial waters. I say that those waters are still being abused and that His Majesty's Government are allowing it to go on. Those waters are being abused in two perhaps in three ways. If one is to describe more precisely what happens German warships are being allowed to go slinking up the coast of Norway within territorial waters in order to start attacks which they could not possibly start from their own bases upon British ships and warships. This was probably true in the case of the 'Rawalpindi'.

THE PRIME MINISTER. Has the hon. Member any evidence for that statement?

MR. DALTON. That is my impression based on information I have received. If the right hon. Gentleman has any evidence to the contrary regarding the 'Rawalpindi' he will no doubt furnish it but I do not think that he will deny my general statement that it is becoming the practice for German ships to use these waters in order to emerge at some point from this safeguarded area so as to be able the better to make attacks upon our merchant ships and upon our warships. That is my information. In the second place German submarines frequent Norwegian territorial waters. They have sunk British ships within them. I do not think that is denied. In the third place there is a constant stream of vessels carrying iron ore to Germany passing through this narrow stretch of sacrosanct water with which so far it has been judged inopportune to interfere. Germany has forfeited all her rights under international law and as far as Norway is concerned it is for serious consideration whether in order to deal with German warships or cargo ships carrying iron ore in view of

the fact that such action on our part would not inflict any damage on Norwegian subjects we should continue to extend to Germany the benefits of any rules of international law

I have offered this illustration partly on its merits and partly to show that the Government seem to be sitting very pretty in relation to a number of these urgent problems. We are suffering in our power to carry the war to early victory and in the lives of our seamen. Thirdly I speak again of Vladivostock. British belligerent rights at sea exist in the Pacific as well as in the Atlantic. The Government should be giving serious consideration—there is no evidence that they are—to the best way in which, subject to proper prudence they can stop this gaping leak in our blockade as the result of which quantities of material useful for warlike purposes have been poured into Germany through Vladivostock and along the Trans Siberian railway, much of it from the United States.

I should like to turn to another matter which has been much agitated in the Press namely, the meeting between Signor Mussolini and Hitler on the Brenner. Many rumours are circulating regarding a peace offer which Hitler may make. A very able diplomat said to me last summer when some people in this country thought the Germans were being very reasonable towards Poland and when Hitler was saying that this was his last territorial claim. It is extraordinary how when the clown in the circus performs the same trick for the fifth or sixth time some people are still taken in. I hope the number who are taken in has diminished how. I hope there are no such people still left in or about 10, Downing Street. I hope there are none left in the City of London, who at one time were so eager to lend money to those who would turn it into arms and use them against this country and I hope there are none left in Mayfair, in the drawing rooms where Ribbentrop was once received as a gentleman.

I hope the number of persons who are still taken in by the so called peace terms which this German tyrant might offer has now diminished to vanishing point but in case it has not I should like to say, on behalf of my hon. Friends and myself—the vast majority at any rate—[*Interruption*] It is a sign of the robust qualities of British public life and British democracy that in all political parties large or small minorities are permitted a reasonable right of self expression. I believe I am speaking for the vast majority not only in this party but in the country, when I say that we will tolerate no more Munichs and no more treacherous truces to last for six months and no more pie crust promises, even if autographed by Hitler.

CAPTAIN RAMSAY (Midlothian and Peebles, Southern)
What about Stalin?

MR. DALTON. I am talking about Hitler. The hon. Member I suppose is feeling a bit sensitive. He feels that I am raking about in the embers of his intellectual past. The right hon.

Gentleman the Prime Minister told us to day—and I believe he means it—that he would not be diverted from the main purpose for which we are in this war which is to defeat and destroy Hitlerism in Germany. I hope there are no more dupes left in the country who would still believe any promise that Hitler or Goering or any of that gang would make. I prefer, if we are to speak of peace aims, the statement which has already been referred to by the Prime Minister himself and others, the peace aims indicated by President Roosevelt in that most remarkable and—it is not too strong a word—that noble broadcast address last Saturday in which I believe he speaks the mind of the vast majority of our people also. He spoke as follows:

The world needs a real peace with guarantees for the integrity of the small nations and of religious and intellectual freedom. We need to day a moral basis for peace. It cannot be a real peace if it fails to recognise brotherhood and it cannot be a lasting peace if the fruit thereof is oppression, starvation and cruelty or if human life is dominated by armed camps. It cannot be a sound peace if small nations must live in fear of powerful neighbours. It cannot be a moral peace if freedom from invasion is paid for by tribute, and it cannot be an intelligent peace if it denies free passage to the knowledge and ideals which permit men to find common ground.

Those are noble and well-chosen words in which the President speaks for the best part of our people as well as his own. But no peace that Hitler or any other Nazi leader offers can possibly satisfy the conditions of a moral peace as defined by President Roosevelt, nor could it satisfy ours.

My right hon. Friend the Member for South Hackney (Mr. H. Morrison) in a speech the other day dealing with the economic conduct of the war, demanded that there should be in the Government, on the opposite bench and in the Departments, more drive, direction and decision. The Prime Minister said that he was not quite so sure, and he thought that if you had too much of those qualities you might find also a fourth 'd'—namely, damnation. The danger is not that, the danger is the opposite. The danger is that damnation may come to this country and to our cause in the war, not through too much but too little drive, direction and decision.

We are in danger of falling down because, as the Prime Minister said to day, he is not prepared to be hustled, and many of his colleagues in their Departments are not prepared to hustle. Meanwhile Hitler does hustle, and let us take note of that. By exposing various deficiencies in the conduct of the war frankly and freely to day, as we have done, and by drawing the necessary conclusions from them, this House of Commons can make its contribution towards the support of the gallant men in the Army, the Navy and in the Air Force, and in support of the great army in the factories and workshops, the fields and the mines, towards that purpose.

which we all have in common namely winning as soon as may be as decisively as may be and at the smallest cost this war against the greatest abomination with which Europe has been cursed for more than a century

THE PRIME MINISTER In the very interesting speech with which the Leader of the Opposition opened the discussion from his side he said that this was an occasion on which every speaker ought to remember the responsibility which attached to the utterances which he might make. He himself strictly conformed to that principle. I do not think I can quite say the same of the speech to which we have just listened. The hon. Member for Bishop Auckland (Mr. Dalton) spoke of the morale of the country and expressed the fear that that morale was not being sufficiently sustained by the actions of the Government. But it is not only the members of the Government who are responsible for keeping up the morale of the people. I would venture to suggest to the hon. Member since as he says he is with us in the purpose for which we are fighting that it does not conduce to winning the war to represent that this country is being outwitted at every turn by our enemy and that the measures which we are taking to carry the war to a successful conclusion are open to criticism on the ground that at every point there are leaks through which supplies are pouring into that country.

MR. DALTON It was admitted by the Minister last night

THE PRIME MINISTER I should criticise statements of that kind if they were true but that is at any rate not a true picture of the case. The hon. Member has completely failed to understand the scale on which we are working or the small proportion to the whole which these various leaks constitute. Of course one cannot expect to establish a perfect blockade from the commencement of a war like this. Nothing is more delicate nothing is more difficult than to conduct a blockade which must necessarily interfere not only with the interests of the enemy but with the interests of neutrals. Nothing I say is more delicate and difficult than to carry on that blockade without having regard to the natural protests of neutrals and to the difficulties which we must encounter in our endeavour to spare them as much as possible, consistent with the purpose we have in view.

The hon. Member if I interpret his remarks as leading to the only conclusion which I think can be drawn from them would drive a coach and horses through any protest made by the United States of America on account of interference with their exports. He would not hesitate to violate the territorial waters of Norway and indeed he really gave us to understand that there were no neutrals whose rights ought to stand if by violating those rights, we could do damage to our enemy. Do not let us forget that we are all the time contrasting the immorality of Hitler with the efforts which we are making to keep within the rules of inter-

national law. I entirely agree that, so far as Germany is concerned, she has absolutely forfeited any right to appeal to international law against any violation of that law which we might embark upon in order to do injury to her. But there are very few cases in which the matter is so simple as that, and when it comes to infringing the rights of neutrals in our endeavour to engage the enemy at closer quarters, you must have some respect for those rules of international law to which we have so often appealed ourselves.

Let me take the particular instance to which the hon. Member has referred in connection with Norway. He says that Norway is tolerating continued and outrageous violations of her neutrality by German warships. I asked him whether he had any evidence of that, and he replied that it was merely an impression. I can only say that the British Navy and the Royal Air Force have kept a constant and continuous watch upon these waters in order to see whether in fact German warships were violating them. If we had been able to establish a single case of the kind, we would not have hesitated ourselves to enter these territorial waters and to attack such a ship, but we have not, up to the present, been able to establish evidence that such violation has taken place, with the one exception, now some months ago—I am leaving the “Altmark” at the moment—when three vessels were, according to our information destroyed in territorial waters. The hon. Member must know that the Norwegian Government deny, in two cases, that these vessels were in territorial waters, and, in the third, plead that there was no evidence to show that the vessel was destroyed by German agency. We might or might not accept that, but, personally, I do not believe that it is correct. At any rate, that was some considerable time ago, and I can honestly say that over a very long period we have been unable to establish any violation by German warships of Norwegian neutral waters which would justify us in going into these waters and, in turn, violating that neutrality.

The right hon. Gentleman the Leader of the Opposition did not spend a great deal of time upon the case of Finland, but addressed himself to rather wider matters, and he proceeded to make certain criticisms and suggestions for dealing with the position in the future. I welcome suggestions and criticisms which are helpful and constructive, and I would like later on, before I sit down, to return to some of the things upon which the right hon. Gentleman touched. But I cannot, of course, ignore the fact that the greater part of the Debate has settled upon the Finnish war with Russia and the part that was played in that war by the present Government. As a number of criticisms have been made—although I do not myself think any of them touched the case which I made earlier in the afternoon—I would like to reply to these various criticisms to the best of my ability.

The right hon. Gentleman the Member for Caithness (Sir A. Sinclair) made a speech which seemed to me to be peevish and

averse He was peevish when he was interrupted although most of us have to submit to interruption and try to do so without losing our equilibrium He was perverse in that he persisted in his charges even though they were proved to be unfounded and I really think that it was a little ungenerous of him to say no word of commendation about the offer of help which I showed we had given to Finland and confine himself entirely to charges of delay, vacillation, hesitation and of criminal ignorance of what was really wanted—

SIR A SINCLAIR I did not say ignorance

THE PRIME MINISTER Oh yes Let me remind the right hon Gentleman of what he said He said we had a representative on the spot, that that representative ought to have known that the situation was deteriorating and ought to have informed us

SIR A SINCLAIR I did not say that he had not informed us, and I did not say 'ignorance'

THE PRIME MINISTER The right hon Gentleman said both, that we were ignorant and that he rather suspected that we did not choose to act on the information that we had

SIR A SINCLAIR I never used that word The right hon Gentleman is inventing a charge

THE PRIME MINISTER The right hon Gentleman invented charges and I will deal with the charges he made

SIR A SINCLAIR The right hon Gentleman is inventing

THE PRIME MINISTER The right hon Gentleman is getting peevish again He has asked questions which seem to be irrelevant He wanted to know not only what we were doing, but also what we ought to have been doing He asked whether we ought to have been planning for the Finns when they should ask us to send them and so decide what to send them whether they needed it or not The right hon Gentleman ascribed to us too great an influence in the counsels of the Finns and too great a part to be played in the war which subsequently took place between the Finns and the Russians. He wanted to know what discussions had taken place about volunteers and what we did about volunteers Let me point out that the question of sending volunteers to Finland could never have played a major part in any assistance that the Government gave to that country As I informed the House, we were told that trained troops were what Field-Marshal Mannerheim wanted The volunteers were not trained troops, they were troops who would have had to be trained after getting to Finland and could never have made a serious difference to the Campaign if they had stood alone

Let me refer again to the question of what our representatives informed us I forget whether it was the right hon Gentleman or the hon Gentleman who sits behind him who complained

that we did not have sufficiently authoritative military representatives on the spot. He surely must know that Brigadier Ling went to Finland and was there on two consecutive periods for a considerable time. We had from him in addition to the information from our military attaché on the spot direct information as to what was going on at headquarters and what was the view at headquarters.

The right hon. Gentleman says that we must have known far back that the situation was deteriorating and that we ought to have taken steps. No, we did not know that. The right hon. Gentleman seems surprised. The information that came to us up to quite a short time before the final collapse was consistently optimistic. We were told continually that the spirit of the army was completely unbroken, that they were confident of being able to hold their positions upon the Mannerheim Line, that if they had to retire from one place they had another behind that which *was duly fortified and in which they could continue to hold out* and it was not until a few days before the final collapse took place that we were really informed that the situation was considered serious.

MR HAROLD MACMILLAN. Can the right hon. Gentleman indicate the time at which this took place? Surely these pessimistic telegrams and information were coming in somewhere between 12th February and 25th February? The right hon. Gentleman speaks of Brigadier Ling, a very gallant and intelligent officer but not an officer of very high rank.

THE PRIME MINISTER. I can only speak from my knowledge of what took place and the information we received. I am sorry the hon. Member has such a poor opinion of Brigadier Ling, who is a distinguished officer and on intimate terms with Field Marshal Mannerheim and whose reports I am sure were as accurate as anybody's reports would have been in the circumstances.

MR MACMILLAN. They were pessimistic.

THE PRIME MINISTER. I can only say what was the information we got and the information was consistently optimistic until a short time before the end. If they had been pessimistic why did they not then ask for large numbers of men to be sent? It was perfectly well known as I have already stated that we only had one request for men at the end of January. I am very anxious in defending myself against the charges made by hon. Members not to put myself in the position of attacking the Finns. That is not my position at all. I have no criticism to offer. I think they have put up a marvellous fight. I think that their request for assistance seems to have been most wanted at the time that they made the request and if the hon. Member

for Stockton on Tees (Mr Harold Macmillan) says that these things did not arrive or that we did not fulfil in full the requests made. I say that I can well understand a man who was as the hon Member was with the Finns seeing for himself the terrific odds against which they were fighting the slaughter which was going on the opportunities that were being missed because there was not the material or the men to carry out the operations—I can understand how he must have raged because assistance was not forthcoming in greater quantity from Great Britain and France. But we did not have anybody on our side taking notes all the time of the requests which were being made or how they were being fulfilled.

I stand broadly by what I said this afternoon. We had a war of our own to consider. We had the safety of our own people to consider. Every request that was made to us for aid was referred in the first instance to the Chiefs of Staff to know whether they could consider that that aid was justified in the circumstances in which we found ourselves. I do not mind saying that if we had considered fully all those things which were actually and properly present to the minds of the Chiefs of Staff we should have sent very much less than we did. The Cabinet took upon themselves the responsibility of the risks we were running in sending to Finland equipment and war material which we thought might possibly help them and might allow them to hold out until the thaw came.

MR HAROLD MACMILLAN I am sorry to interrupt my right hon Friend again but I must point out that I made no complaint except about the fact that a false impression had been created by the publication of figures from the French and English Governments which bore no relation to the actual quantities which left France or England. My right hon Friend stated that the Finnish Government had made repeated requests for materials and every one of those requests had been answered. If he will make a careful study of the facts he will find that the average time between the request and the decision to grant it or not was more than four weeks and the average time between the decision to release material and its leaving this country was about the same—four weeks. I say that that is not the impression given by my right hon Friend's statement on 13th March or to day.

THE PRIME MINISTER How can my hon Friend possibly know what was the average time?

MR MACMILLAN Because I have the figures.

THE PRIME MINISTER I say that that gives an altogether false picture of what happened. I say that every request was immediately considered. I cannot say—and I have never said—that every request was answered in full but it was immediately considered and in the light of the dangers to ourselves we did

the very utmost that we possibly could. Let me take the question of small arms ammunition, which was particularly mentioned by the right hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland. He said that only one-thirtieth part of the ammunition which was asked for arrived—

SIR A. SINCLAIR: Was despatched.

THE PRIME MINISTER: The hon. Member for Stockton-on-Tees said that none arrived before the end of the war.

MR. MACMILLAN: No, I did not say that. With every respect, I ask my right hon. Friend to repeat what I said. I gave a perfectly accurate account.

THE PRIME MINISTER: Will my hon. Friend tell me what he said? I have said what I understood him to say, but I gather he did not say that.

MR. MACMILLAN: I was very anxious—because I believed it to be important in the national interests—to avoid giving actual figures. I made a rapid calculation, although I could have given the actual figures. If the figure of the total amount asked for was x , the total amount which belonged by this pre-emptive order to the Finnish Government was one-tenth of x , and the total amount actually sent out was one-twentieth of x .

THE PRIME MINISTER: The House will see how impossible it is to deal with the situation on those lines, but let me say this: The small arms ammunition required by the Finns was not the same bore as our own small arms ammunition. Therefore, it was a special operation to make this particular ammunition, or to alter our own so that it might conform with their calibre. They asked for very large quantities. We could not, on account of the reason I have given, supply enormous quantities at once, but we did put into operation arrangements to manufacture this ammunition according to the Finnish requirements and to send it forward in a continuous stream. The actual amount we dispatched was not one-thirtieth, but about a quarter of what we promised. I cannot say how much of that arrived before the end of the war. It may be true, but I do not think it is, that none arrived; but I can say that it did go forward regularly week after week, and I cannot believe that a great deal did not arrive at its destination. That being so, there should not be any possible misapprehension about something that I said this afternoon. The list of material which I gave to the House was of British material and while the expedition was a joint expedition and part of the forces would have been French forces, the list I gave to the House was of British material only.

As to this charge that we were too late, I do not know whether hon. Members realise what an enormous amount of preparation is required for an expedition of this kind and character. All the

troops have to be specially selected, and not only specially selected but specially equipped because you cannot go into temperatures below zero in deep snow without special clothing and equipment. That is not the sort of equipment which we generally keep in stock in this country. It had therefore to be procured from another country and all that took time. Then, of course there was all the transport which had to be accumulated and made ready for the reception of the troops and supplies. Hon. Members will appreciate that at the present time there is a very great strain on our shipping resources and they will realise also that it is not an easy thing to go and pick up a number of ships at a moment's notice and make them ready for an expedition of this kind. Nevertheless it was done. Then these ships had to be loaded with supplies and other ships made ready for the transport of the troops. Therefore at the beginning we had to calculate how long it would take before we could make these preparations and have them complete because we did not want to go either to the Finns or Swedes or Norwegians and say 'If you will do this we will have the men ready for you some time in the future.' We wanted to be able to say to them 'If you will do this we have got the whole thing ready now.'

That was therefore the plan. Everything was arranged according to a definite time table and into that time table we had to fit this request to Finland to appeal for assistance and the subsequent appeal to Norway and Sweden to permit passage of the troops. It is perfectly clear that the Finnish hesitation to make that appeal was not a question of a technicality and not because the expedition was too small and not because the expedition was too late. The reason is given in perfectly clear terms in the Order of the Day issued by Field Marshal Mannerheim, part of which was quoted by the right hon. Gentleman the Member for Caithness and Sutherland. This is what he said:

Unfortunately the valuable promises of assistance which the Western Powers have given us could not be realised when our neighbours concerned for their own security refused the right for the transit of troops.

There you have the whole reason why Finland hesitated to make an appeal. If she had made the appeal she would have put Sweden and Norway into that embarrassing position from which they desired to be spared and it is not unnatural perhaps in that condition being so anxious to be spared that they put all the pressure they could upon Finland not to make the appeal.

I turn now to my right hon. Friend the Member for Devonport (Mr. Horé Delahaye). It is interesting that his speech was surrounded by that of the right hon. and gallant Gentleman the Member for Newcastle under Lyme (Colonel Wedgwood) because while my right hon. Friend below the Gangway thought that the plan of the expedition was wise the right hon. and gallant Gentle

man the Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme thought it the maddest thing that could ever have entered our heads. The fact is, of course, that there were undoubtedly dangers, uncertainties and difficulties connected with this expedition, and that they were formidable enough to demand careful consideration of the plan before we decided upon it. It would have been very logical to have said at the beginning, "The uncertainty as to whether this plan can ever be carried out, the difficulties of maintaining the force so far away are so great that we cannot really do anything." We could have taken that line. But would anybody at that time have dared to put forward that suggestion—that we should deny any help to Finland that we could send through those two countries? I do not think that would have been a very popular move. And indeed, if there was a chance of saving Finland, even at considerable risk to ourselves, I maintain that we were bound to take it. The very thing that has been said by so many hon. Members to-day about the result of this failure shows what importance they attached to saving Finland. Therefore we were fully justified in taking those risks, and in trying to do what we could, even at the very last moment.

My right hon. Friend, however, says that, while accepting the wisdom of the plan, he condemns our hesitation and vacillation in carrying it out. I have given the House an account which, I venture to think, shows that there was neither hesitation nor vacillation. The plan was carefully thought out, the time-table was prepared, the preparations were carried through without a hitch. Everything was made ready, and the only reason the expedition never sailed was not on account of hesitation on our part; it was on account of what I have so often repeated—because when the time came the Finns felt that they could not make the appeal to us in view of the fact that Sweden and Norway had so flatly refused to allow these troops to pass through their countries.

Then my right hon. Friend says that if these difficulties existed in the case of troops, they did not arise in the case of aeroplanes.

He says, and truly says, that during the last days, before the peace terms were signed, there was a profusion of targets which could not fail to offer success in breaking up the Russian reinforcements. Quite true. It was just in those last days that we had the frankest appeals from Finland to send a large quantity of bombers. We could only take those bombers from the defence of this country or of the Expeditionary Force in France. Nevertheless, we considered with sympathy the appeal which was made to us. We had to remember that those bombers could not operate without there first of all being preparations—ground staff, reserve of ammunition, means of repair. You cannot take a whole squadron of bombers over to Finland, drop the bombs, and fly back again. If they really to be of any use, they must be provided with whatever is necessary for them to be able to operate continuously—from Finland, not from this country.

In spite of that, we were ready to supply the crews, we were ready to supply a very substantial number of bombing aeroplanes, ~~if~~ that appeal was to be made. But by that time we knew that negotiations were going on. We were not at all sure that the fighting would continue. We could not contemplate sending a large number of bombers, precious to ourselves, to Finland when, after all, they might fail to help the Finns and we could not get them back again. The bombers that were promised were included in the list which I gave to the House. If they were not dispatched, it was because the appeal was never made to us. An appeal was made at the last moment by the Finnish Minister to send off all the bombers we could make ready at once, with their pilots in order to give all the help we could to the Finns in their extremity. We have a perfectly clear conscience in this matter. The Allies, faced as they are with the possibility of heavy attacks being made upon them at any moment, could not ignore their responsibilities to their own people and to the winning of the war against our enemy, not even to save Finland. Subject to that, we did all that it was possible for us to do in the time at our disposal.

I want to say one or two words upon what the right hon. Gentleman the Leader of the Opposition said on a wider front. He laid it down that it was our duty to this country to increase our own production to the utmost limit that was possible, to take all possible measures to prevent waste, and to make the fullest possible use of all our resources. I am in complete agreement with that view. With regard to two of the points on which the right hon. Gentleman touched, namely, the production of coal and the production of food, I want to say—and I can say when an appeal is made to me in that spirit—that we recognise that greater and greater efforts have to be made if we are to get the full benefit of the possible production of this country. I do not mind admitting that in many respects our organisation is still faulty. I should be foolish to deny it, but what I can say is that we are aware of it and are taking steps to fill up the deficiencies. We are initiating new campaigns for increased production of coal and food, and with the help, which I know we shall get, from labour, I am convinced that even in the course of the next fortnight, the House will be able to see an appreciable difference in the organisation of the production of coal and food. In transport and shipping, I recognise again that there is room for improvement. We have to make the utmost use of all the ships that we require, and it must need the constant attention of the Ministry of Shipping to see not only that all the ships are in use, but that the least possible time is taken in loading and discharging, and that their voyages are so arranged as to make the minimum demands upon the length of the voyage which is necessary to bring to our shores the particular article that is required.

The right hon. Gentleman suggested that too much time was taken in arriving at decisions. I quite understand that complaints

of that kind must continually arise but I would say to him I say it not as an excuse but as an explanation—that there very few questions which do not concern more than one Department and that it is absolutely impossible in the organisation of government to make each Department a dictator. If you to have not only a quick decision but a right decision which equally important you must take into account the results of decision upon the other Departments concerned. That means that there must be constant communication between the Departments concerned and that in turn is bound to lead to a certain amount of delay. Nevertheless I want him and the House believe that I have no rigid mind upon matters of administration and the machinery of government. I have said before that it is not only the question of the machinery or the changing of machinery which has to be considered. There is a right and a wrong time for everything. Many things which may be wrong to day may be right to morrow and if they are right to day they may be wrong to morrow. A man who has a rigid mind will never take notice of those changes. I endeavour to keep my mind fluid and flexible and as I find conditions change as I find deficiencies and faults in this direction or another it is my endeavour so to change the machinery of government from time to time as to enable us to correct those deficiencies and to make for that efficiency in working which alone can satisfy us.

Let me say once again that although there have been differences expressed between us this afternoon they have been differences which are on the surface of an underlying unity of purpose. The hon. Member for Bishop Auckland has not always a very conciliatory way of putting things but he need not be under any anxiety lest I should be in a hurry to accept peace terms which are not in conformity with those ideals of peace with which we started this war. I have said to myself that I accept and subscribe to the words used the other day by President Roosevelt as to what a peace should be. When still we had not embarked upon war I did my best to avert any war at all. I hoped up to the last moment, it might be possible to achieve a stable peace without the of the final struggle. Now that I have entered upon that struggle I shall be just as determined and just as persistent during the war in achieving the purpose that we have in mind as I was in trying to keep the peace before the war started.

21 March 1940

MR MANDER (Wolverhampton East) The impression left on my mind as the result of the Debate on Tuesday is that the Government were found guilty of culpable indecision and delay in dealing with the question of Finland. At the same time I think we have had a lucky escape and I think the would have been an exceedingly hazardous one. With to the future I cannot help thinking that Russia has burnt her fingers very badly and has learned a very severe lesson and is not

that the question they are likely to ask themselves is 'What do you do when you were neutral?' The question is not one which we can give a very satisfactory reply. Therefore I am convinced that the only way by which we can get the aid and co-operation of the neutrals is by showing by our will and determination that we intend to win the war in the shortest possible time. That and nothing else will rally the neutrals.

I also want to make some reference to the economic block which I am sure is not nearly as strong or as effective as it is being made out to be. The agreements with neutral countries appear to have been made on the basis of their re-export trade to Germany on a scale obtaining immediately before the war—that is, at a time when Germany was building up her reserves. Certain features in the agreements with Belgium and Norway run quite contrary to the principles which were made in the last war when neutrals were required to receive their own requirements only. I greatly regret that the Government should have so far departed from what was a wise decision. I will give an example of what has been happening. Figures have recently been published of raw cotton exports from the United States to neutrals. I will compare those for the period from January 1939 to November 1939, with those for the same period of 1938. I ask the House to note these figures. Imports of raw cotton from the United States in the case of Sweden increased four times, in the case of Norway and Belgium they doubled, in the case of Holland, increased three times, in the case of Yugoslavia increased by 50 per cent, in the case of Hungary increased 20 times, and in the case of Switzerland increased no less than 160 times. I wonder what explanation the Minister of War can give for such an extraordinarily unsatisfactory state of affairs?

MR A V ALEXANDER (Sheffield Hillsborough) : Has the hon. Member made any check upon those figures in order to ascertain how much of that represents a transfer of trade, done through entrepot ports like Hamburg, for supplies of raw materials to the countries he names? I would like to support the trend of the hon. Member's argument but I should like information on that point.

MR MANDER : I dare say there may be qualifications and reserves about these figures but, even allowing for that, I think they are sufficiently startling to call for some explanation in view of the shortage of time, however. I do not want to be drawn into a discussion. I would refer, however, to new imports of goods from Vladivostok into Russia and possibly through to China. Last January there was imported 2,000 tons of tin against only 100 tons at all in the same period of the year before. It is new trade, new markets, Germany is keeping hundreds of trucks available on that line for transport. I believe that the Government have this

under consideration and I can only urge them to give the closest thought to it and act as soon and as effectively as they possibly can. One of the most important questions is that of the supply of iron ore from Sweden via Norwegian territorial waters to Germany. The Prime Minister suggested the other night that the leaks and the gaps in the blockade were very small indeed compared with the effect of the blockade as a whole. That is an untrue picture to give in connection with this important item. Germany is relying for two thirds of her ore on this source of supply, on which her industrial activities depend. Therefore it is a matter of vital importance to her and to us that action should be taken. I think it will be generally agreed that, as far as Germany is concerned, we are fully entitled under international law, to take any action, by way of reprisal we think fit because of her complete overruling of law in these matters and her sinking of neutral shipping. But the question of dealing with the neutrals is a different matter and I want to present certain arguments which would justify us in taking action inside neutral waters.

I contend that Norway has failed to maintain the neutrality of those waters. She has permitted, not willingly, the sinking of three ships in her waters by German action. To be specific I will give the names—the *Thomas Walton* (British) of 4,460 tons, the *Deftford* (British) of 4,034 tons, and the *Garoufalia* (Greek), of 4,703 tons. There is the case of the *Altmark* too. You have four specific cases where Norway has failed in her international duty. But there is more than that. Norway and Sweden were under an obligation under the Covenant of the League to permit British and French troops to go through their territory to the help of Finland. They refused that permission. They broke the Covenant of the League and refused to carry out an international obligation. I say that, on all those grounds there is justification for the action by us—which will be in accordance with international law—of going in and stopping those vital sources of supply for Germany, which are being used to manufacture guns and ammunition to destroy British citizens. In this connection I should like to quote an interesting article which appeared in the *Daily Telegraph*, written by 'Pertinax' in which he said

action in regard to Finland we were acting in accordance with the Covenant of the League. Why could we not obtain the same backing for any action we may take in connection with our war with Germany? Incidentally the Prime Minister referred to the fact that Finland was a neutral but of course there is no neutrality when the Covenant is put into operation. The proposal I submit is that we should take steps to see that the question of German aggression against Poland is brought before the League Council. We do not want the impression created that the Council of the League deals only with left wing aggressors. All aggressors are equally objectionable whether they are left, right or centre.

MR BOOTHBY (Aberdeen East) From time to time some of us on these benches and on the benches opposite have expressed criticism of the Government during recent weeks. I think I may say that nobody on either side of the House doubts the good intentions of the Government. Their plans may also be excellent. But what we have reason to complain of is the delay in obtaining decisions from the Government on vital matters of policy. Either the decision has not been given at all or it has been given too late. When I heard the Prime Minister in the Debate on Wednesday say that 'we cannot be hustled' I could not help bringing my mind back to the question for example of the Ministry of Supply, or of the storage of raw materials about both of which subjects we had many Debates in this House. I could not help thinking that with a little more hustling then we might have found ourselves in an easier position to day.

The truth is and there is no use blinking it and no useful work is performed by shirking the issue that we did in fact begin this war, although we had plenty of warning with a shortage of raw materials which in the circumstances was quite unforgivable. I will not specify them. It would not be in the public interest, but hon. Members know what they are and they continue to this day, and we are paying the price of these shortages in the holding up of production at home and of our export trade. All that we want to feel sure of is that everything possible is being done now. What is production? Is it at the maximum? If it is why have we still 1 400 000 unemployed? That seems to me very difficult to explain after six months of war. Although there may be certain technical explanations from the Minister of Labour, I feel we ought not to have on the register 1 400 000 unemployed after six months of war. Administrative difficulties were increased inevitably but in so far as they have been due to lack of co-ordination and lack of centralised direction I submit that there is a great responsibility on the Government, who have refused so far to accede to the repeated requests of hon. Members on all sides of the House to produce a better machinery of Government for the conduct of the war.

The hon. Member who has just sat down dealt in some detail with the offensive side of our economic policy—the blockade. I do not propose to go into that in any detail but I would say to my

right hon. Friend the Minister of Economic Warfare that I for my part feel convinced that while he has done in many respects a very good job of work still too many goods are being imported to Germany. Without wishing to criticise him unfairly in any way there are one or two points to which I would ask him to direct his special attention. First of all is he quite satisfied that too much is not going in through Trieste and Genoa? I think the figures of these ports and the increase of merchandise going in are very disturbing. I know that we have a delicate situation to deal with here but we are perfectly entitled in view of our command of the seas to take more energetic steps to stop contraband going into Germany wherever we possibly can.

Passing from the purely blockade aspect to the general question of monetary policy I wish although I do not expect an answer this afternoon to express my opinion that the fact that by this time we have not blocked foreign assets in this country is really scandalous. I do not think hon. Members realise that any foreigner except an actual enemy can sell securities in the London market and take sterling in exchange. It is surely times of existing circumstances that we established an absolute control of foreign exchanges and blocked all foreign assets in this country. Week by week we are losing foreign exchange which may ultimately prove to be invaluable to us and I would ask my right hon. Friend whether he will be good enough to ask the Treasury to consider this point which I believe to be one of vital importance and I am not alone in that.

There is one last point which now that we have the pleasure and privilege of the presence of the Minister of Economic Warfare I should like to mention. That is the question of the Balkans and the Danube. I am not very happy about what is going on down there and especially about the position in Rumania. According to my reports Bucharest is swarming with German agents and industrialists who are establishing an absolute economic stranglehold of that country and are buying up all the oil companies and elevators and the barges on the Danube. During the last few months we have had a great advantage because the Danube has been frozen and for that reason the Germans have been unable to make use of that channel on a big scale. The Danube is now beginning to unfreeze and I would ask my right hon. Friend what steps—and they must be very vigorous steps—against Dr. Clodius and Dr. Schacht are now to be taken. We want to see that when the Danube thaws it will not become a great channel for imports into Germany of vital commodities including oil and other raw materials. We ought to leave no stone unturned to prevent that happening if we can possibly manage it. Nobody who has any knowledge of what is going on in the Balkans can feel happy about the position down there. I am entitled to speak on this subject because about half a dozen of us in the House on both sides have been pressing this question of trade with the Balkans not only since the war broke out but for the past two years. If we had taken

energetic and vigorous action in time, we should have been in entirely different position from that in which we are to day. We should those of us who feel as we do on this and kindred subjects not acknowledge the fact that we are paying for our sins omission not only since war broke out, but also during the critical months which immediately preceded it? We cannot get away from that fact.

To follow up what the hon. Member for East Wolverhampton said on the general question of foreign policy I have spent the last fortnight in neutral countries, and I would say to the House

Do not let us deceive ourselves that the capitulation of Finland has not been a serious blow to the Allied cause. It was a serious blow both from a practical and from a psychological point of view. I was in Switzerland when it happened and the one comment made to me was this, "It is another example of the fate which befalls those neutral countries who do what you say is their duty." That is the argument we were up against. The neutral countries say "It is all very well for you to complain of us look what happens when we do stand up—Austria, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Finland. It may all be quite unavoidable, it is not encouraging from our point of view." That is the argument with which we are confronted.

I would say this about the Finnish tragedy—it is a point which was not really made in the Debate of Wednesday, although I feel that in some respects it is the most important of all. There was a general recognition in neutral countries that in the case of Finland we were faced with most formidable obstacles to her assistance and there was a presumption that those had proved insuperable. (If we had stuck to the fact that we had done all we could in the way of giving practical assistance to Finns and owing to the attitude of Sweden and Norway we could do no more, we could have got away without any serious loss of prestige. The folly, in my opinion, was that at the eleventh hour when we knew that the capacity of the Finns to continue almost finished when they were, in fact exhausted, we proceeded to announce to the whole world that we were prepared to send an expeditionary force to Finland if only they would ask for it. Why invite a rebuff at that particular moment? Why demonstrate to the whole world that once again we would have liked to do it, but were too late? It is that which did the damage, not so much the fact that we were slow in sending materials as that at the eleventh hour we invited a rebuff by saying we would send an expeditionary force when we ought to have known—if we did not know it we ought to have known it, because they knew it on the Continent—that it was by then too late to be of any real use.

It was the ineptitude of that action which caused the fall of the French Government and that is what worries some of us. As I say, it is not the intentions of the Government, which I know to be excellent, but the manner of their execution, which is at fault, and I believe that in the matter of the Government

policy on the whole of the Finnish business the real criticism is not that we did not do what we could but that when we finally offered to send an expeditionary force it was already too late. I would say before I sit down that the one incident—and it is worth remembering by those who are disposed to criticise hon. Members who press for a more energetic policy with regard to the neutrals—which has done us real good in Europe in recent weeks is the *Altmark* incident. It has done us more good than anything else in Norway as well as elsewhere. But unfortunately it has not been followed up.

We are fighting for our existence against a most formidable foe. A great Englishman once said "Neglect no means", and I suggest that it is time this House followed the courageous example of the French Chamber and insisted on the formation without further delay of a War Cabinet of not more than half a dozen men without portfolio who can devote their whole time and attention to the conduct of the war and that these men should be chosen without any regard to personalities or parties but should be the best men available for the service of the State at the present time. Although this request may not at this moment find a very ready echo in this House I believe that it will find a heartfelt response among the ordinary men and women of this country and also in the armed Forces.

MR BUTLER The hon. Member for East Wolverhampton is to be congratulated on producing a very tasty rehash of several questions which have been fully ventilated in this House up to late and on doing so if I may say so in his usual attractive and efficient manner. He said that he had been in contact with the youth groups all over the country. The Government are fully inspired by the desires and aspirations of youth at the present time but when the hon. Gentleman says that these youth groups are distrustful of those Members of the Government that got them into the war I must indignantly repudiate any suggestion that it was the Members of the Government who got this country into war. Let us place this blame fairly and squarely where it belongs that is on the leaders of Nazi Germany who with their senseless ambition and ruthless activities have necessitated the British Empire rising as one man to defend the ideals and manner of living in which we all unitedly believe. Those are the shoulders upon which the guilt for landing us as the hon. Gentleman described it into this war must be laid.

My hon. friend the Member for East Aberdeen (Mr. Boothby) and the hon. Member for East Wolverhampton raised one or two points about the economic blockade. I have the benefit of the moral and indeed of the physical support of the Minister for Economic Warfare. There is not time for two Ministers to address the House and therefore I shall not spoil the excellent command of his subject which my hon. Friend has by giving a version of the answer which he will no doubt give better than I

can but I will say that the points raised by the hon Gentleman are valid and serious points I can assure him that they will have my hon Friend's attention and taking the question of cotton exports I can inform the House that this question is actively attended to at the moment and its importance and seriousness realised There are various considerations and a very important one was quite rightly put forward by the right hon Gentleman opposite namely the question of the entrepot trade But there are also considerations such as market conditions and the rush to buy before a possible rise in prices which have affected the amount of cotton exports going into the various neutral countries to which the hon Member for East Wolverhampton referred The hon Gentleman raised the question of the trade passing through Vladivostok and there again the matter is being actively considered by His Majesty's Government He also raised the question of the blocking of foreign assets That too is being dealt with as is also the question of the Balkans In referring to Rumania I would like to assure my hon Friend the Member for East Aberdeen that the Germans are not getting it all their own way in that part of the world

The hon Member for East Wolverhampton referred to the question of iron ore from Sweden and he asked that the importance of this commodity in the German industry should be borne in mind I can assure him that that is the case He also raised the question of whether in giving our help to Finland we could not have insisted that Norway and Sweden should give passage to our troops under Article 16 Section 3 of the Covenant As House will remember that lays down that the nation concerned should give right to the passage of troops across its territory The answer to that I think is that the Norwegian and Swedish Governments and indeed the Scandinavian Governments as a whole had already made their attitude on this subject perfectly clear I went to Geneva in December on behalf of the Government to the meeting at which Russia was expelled from the League in view of her attack upon Finland There were Debates upon a League Resolution which was then passed It was legitimate at that time to hold that the full application of Article 16 was not excluded from that resolution but the representative of Sweden made a specific statement on behalf of himself and the other Scandinavian States in which he made—and these are his words

* Every reservation in so far as the resolution involves any measure coming within the scope of the system of sanctions

MR MANDER It was purely a unilateral action

MR BUTLER Whether it was a unilateral action or not, the fact is that that represented the attitude of the Scandinavian States and under the circumstances we did not feel that any useful purpose would be served in pressing those Governments to assert a position such as the hon Gentleman desires when they have already stated their attitude This does not mean that we accept their attitude but it does mean that in considering this question

from the particular angle that the hon. Gentleman suggests we had no alternative but to understand the position in which these Governments placed themselves. In a previous question the hon. Gentleman wanted us to refer the Polish case to the League and he said that if we did that, starting with Article 17 and then bringing into operation Article 16 this would automatically cut off exactly what Germany desires to enable her to carry on the prosecution of the war. That again I think is a misunderstanding of the present position. If we had merely to invoke Article 16 and trust that the neutrals concerned would automatically cut off all the commodities necessary to Germany for the successful prosecution of the struggle it would indeed be any easy world. But I recommend the hon. Gentleman to revert to a close study of the League of Nations documents of which I have a healthy exhibition here and to revive his memory to read for instance what happened when the principles of the Covenant were reviewed in September 1938. He will see that there was no agreement as to the automatic application of Article 16 such as he expects, and in fact, had we taken the action that he suggests it would be most unlikely that we should have achieved the object he has in

Covenant, to which I have referred, let us remember that in all the discussions the spirit of the Covenant has remained intact, and it is that spirit which should animate our attitude at the present time. If we recall to the neutrals the years during which we worked together at Geneva, I feel sure that that will be the most effective way. If we do it in company with our ally France, if we devote our attention to developing Anglo French co-operation and if on our side of the wall we develop our view of Western civilisation as opposed to the barbarity which has taken place on the East side of that wall, that, I think, will be an initiative which will create confidence in the cause that we have taken up.

CHAPTER IV

THE HOUSE OF COMMONS DEMANDS A CHANGE

2nd April, 1940

THE PRIME MINISTER (MR CHAMBERLAIN). The House will desire to hear something of the last meeting of the Supreme War Council in London on 28th March. This meeting gave us an opportunity to welcome M. Paul Reynaud for the first time since he became President of the Council. He was, however, already well known to us and to the general public in this country for his great work as Minister of Finance, for the part he played in bringing about the Anglo French Financial Agreement of last December, and for his untiring devotion to the common cause which unites our two countries.

The Supreme War Council reviewed the developments in the strategic situation since their last meeting, and took various important decisions regarding the future line of action of the Allies. This is not the occasion to reveal the terms of those decisions, but I dare say the House will have no great difficulty in guessing at the general nature and tenour of the discussions which were so harmoniously conducted.

In the meantime what emerged from the meeting and was displayed to the public eye was the solemn declaration to which the two Governments set their hands. In recent months the collaboration and unity of purpose between this country and France has been growing ever closer. I have already mentioned the financial agreement last December. Since then we have expanded our arrangements to cover commercial questions, and the supply of munitions, and only the other day my right hon. Friend, the Colonial Secretary, met his French colleague in Paris where they

together agreed on plans for the closest co-operation in the colonial sphere. By the solemn declaration our two Governments have now extended the scope of these arrangements to all spheres affecting the interests and security of the two nations. The declaration, which was issued on 28th March, reads as follows:

"The Government of the French Republic and His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland mutually undertake that during the present war they will neither negotiate nor conclude an armistice or treaty of peace except by mutual agreement.

"They undertake not to discuss peace terms before reaching complete agreement on the conditions necessary to ensure to each of them an effective and lasting guarantee of their security.

"Finally, they undertake to maintain, after the conclusion of peace, a community of action in all spheres for so long as may be necessary to safeguard their security and to effect the reconstruction with the assistance of other nations, of an international order which will ensure the liberty of peoples, respect for law, and the maintenance of peace in Europe."

If this declaration had dealt only with the conduct of the war it might have been criticised as unnecessary in view of the complete unity of purpose already existing between the two countries. But it goes far beyond the expression of British and French determination to fight together for a common victory, and provides for continuous Anglo-French co-operation in the establishment of peace and in the reconstruction of an international order designed to ensure the liberty of peoples, respect for law and the maintenance of peace in Europe.

The House will have observed the two salient features of the declaration, namely, first, that any proposals for peace whatever their source, would not even be discussed before this country and France had reached full agreement on the requirements for a true peace safeguarding their own security and that of the other free nations of Europe. And, second, that, after the conclusion of peace, while the assistance of other nations will be welcomed in the reconstruction of Europe, Anglo-French community of action will be maintained in all spheres so long as may be necessary to effect and consolidate this reconstruction.

I would like to say a word here of our Polish Allies to whom we are already bound not to make peace except by common agreement. My right hon. Friend the First Lord of the Admiralty spoke eloquently the other evening of the Poles and in particular of the prowess of the units of the Polish Navy at present operating with the Royal Navy. Divisions of the Polish Army are reforming in France and Polish airmen are being trained both in this country and in France. We are confident that these forces will give a good account of themselves in the common struggle in which we are now engaged.

Returning now to the meeting of the Supreme War Council, the picture which was presented to the Allies by the present situation was of a Germany putting her own interpretation on the

obligations of neutrals and accompanying it by threats of the dire consequences which might result to them from failure to comply with German demands. This problem which Germany has raised of a double standard of neutrality is one which we and neutrals now have to face. The policy of the Allies has been determined by a scrupulous regard for neutral rights whereas Germany has not hesitated to destroy neutral property and murder the nationals of neutral States whenever it suited her policy to do so. She has not scrupled to threaten the invasion of neutral countries in order to prevent them taking steps to assist their neighbours against aggression or to protect their own interests. Our respect for neutral rights and our sympathy for the practical difficulties of neutrals must not blind us to the fact that any aid they may give to Germany might if carried far enough render them in the end liable to the hideous fate that has overtaken the previous victims of German policy.

If we are to bring this war to a close with the least possible destruction and dislocation of our common spiritual and material civilisation we must deprive Germany of the materials most essential for the prosecution of her aggressive policy. The Allies are therefore determined to prosecute the economic war to the utmost of their power. Already much has been accomplished. Negotiations for war trade agreements have been successfully concluded with Norway, Sweden, Iceland, Belgium and Holland, and an agreement with Denmark has been signed this afternoon at the Foreign Office. Discussions are also proceeding in Paris for a similar agreement between the Allies and Switzerland, and commercial agreements of an important character have been reached with Spain, Greece and Turkey. We have been happy to welcome to this country Monsieur Belin, Vice Governor of the National Bank of Yugoslavia, who is at present in London for economic and financial discussions, and a mission is expected shortly from Rumania to discuss a revision of the existing Payments Agreement. We are also looking forward to the visit to this country at the end of the week of Monsieur Georges Monnet, the French Minister of Blockade. All the war trade agreements into which we have entered contain stipulations regulating the exports of neutral countries' own domestic produce to Germany. For example, these stipulations provide for the strict limitation of the export to Germany of the fats essential to her war effort.

Another weapon in our armoury is that of purchase. It is obviously out of the question to purchase the entire exportable surplus of Germany's neighbours, but concentration on certain selected commodities such as minerals, fats and oil is to an ever increasing extent reducing the supply of these commodities available for Germany. For instance, we have completed arrangements to purchase the entire exportable surplus of Norway's current catch of whale oil, and though it is preferable that I should not go into detail, I can say that Allied purchases of minerals in South Eastern Europe have been on a large scale. British trade

with a number of Germany's neutral neighbours is undoubtedly capable of being substantially developed and I look forward to an intensification of trade exchanges to our mutual benefit. At the same time the countries concerned must realise that we cannot agree to make available to them products drawn from Empire sources unless in return they are prepared to give us guarantees as to the limitation of their future trade with Germany.

Most important of all the weapons of our economic warfare is the employment of our sea power and the Allies are determined to continue and intensify the use of this weapon to the full. His Majesty's ships have already taken certain practical steps to interfere with the unimpeded passage of German cargo ships from Scandinavia. These operations have been carried out in close proximity to German naval bases, showing once again how empty are the German boasts that the control of the North Sea has passed into their hands. Other measures are under consideration. The House may be assured that we have not yet reached the limit of our effective operations in this region—the scene of the sinking of so many neutral ships and the murder of so many neutral seamen. Our attention has also recently been drawn to the possibility that Germany may have been finding ways and means of increasing her supplies from neutral sources by routes confined to the land and hitherto hardly used. We have carefully reviewed the situation and we intend to take suitable measures. I may remind hon. Members in this connection that His Majesty's ships have recently stopped in Far Eastern waters Soviet ships suspected of carrying contraband destined for Germany via Vladivostok.

We have heard a great deal recently of possible developments in South Eastern Europe. It has even been suggested by German propaganda that it is our aim to disturb the peace of the Balkans. This is of course untrue and we are confident that our Agreements with Turkey have on the contrary contributed most effectively to maintain peace and security in South Eastern Europe. In order to examine the many urgent problems both political and economic presented by the situation in South Eastern Europe it has been decided as the House is aware to summon to London, for purpose of consultation His Majesty's Ambassador at Angora and His Majesty's Ministers at Athens, Belgrade, Bucharest, Sofia and Budapest. They will be in London early next week. We shall also have the advantage of the presence in London at that time of Sir Percy Loraine, His Majesty's Ambassador in Rome who will be on short leave of absence. I am sure that the House will welcome this initiative which we hope will have fruitful results both for the Allied cause and for the maintenance of peace and security in that area.

Each successive meeting of the Supreme War Council has illustrated more clearly the strength of the ties binding this country and France together. The Supreme War Council is in fact the outstanding example of Anglo-French collaboration in all spheres of which the solemn declaration published on 28th March is the

most recent development. It is our hope that these meetings may be held more frequently and at more regular intervals not only to forward the prosecution of the war but also to enable us to perfect the machinery which will be required for consolidating peace at the end of the war

MR ATTLEE (Limehouse) We were interested to hear from the Prime Minister the account of the Supreme War Council. I think that every one of us realises that in this war we must act in the closest possible collaboration with our ally France. I was glad to know that that collaboration is not to stop at the end of the war. Much of the trouble from which we are suffering to day arose through a misunderstanding between Britain and France after victory had been gained in the last war. Our task is not merely to win the war but to win the peace and I welcome the declaration that France and Britain together with other nations, will have to build up conditions which will make a new international order.

The Prime Minister alluded to the position of the neutral States. I am quite convinced that the opinion in all the democracies is overwhelmingly on our side. They know perfectly well that we are fighting their battle. When they talk of international law they know quite well that there will be no more international law if we do not win but only the law of the jungle enforced by the brute power of the Nazis. At the present time they are actually suffering heavy losses although they are at peace. We on this side of the House are second to none in our support of the principles of international law, we stand for international law but if we are to preserve international law we must see that enemy do not use international law as a cloak for their own designs. I believe that the neutral peoples will quite understand that we have to review this matter not only on the short view but on the long view. We have to consider how far some neutral States are free agents in this matter. Above all we have got to preserve international law by defeating the aggressor and I hope we shall have the very closest consultations with all neutral States on this matter. I think looking back on the past that as has been said so often, a united stand on behalf of international law ought to have been taken long ago and to day we must get into the closest collaboration with all those peoples who are standing for the rule of law.

The Prime Minister said many matters were discussed and I think we can all guess what they were. He went on to talk particularly of economic warfare. It is abundantly clear that we must make that economic warfare effective. We must stop leaks in the blockade whether they are in the Far East or nearer at hand. We must also exercise to the full our financial power. A very valuable weapon in that regard is the buying up of resources. I do not think that was done nearly vigorously enough in the early of the war. I do not believe it was always done in time. We ought to be assured that the Ministry of Economic Warfare has sufficient scope in carrying out this policy. I hope that it is not

thwarted by other Departments, that there is no "dead hand" of the Treasury intervening; because, after all, extensive purchases on a war basis are a matter in which time is of vital importance. Unless there is someone who can decide at once, you may lose the chance, or have to pay very dearly for things which could have been bought more cheaply only a week or two before. I believe that we have lost some chances in that way, but I hope we shall lose none in the future.

I am glad to see that an Agreement has been arrived at with Denmark. We want to help the neutrals, and we can best do it by these close agreements. I welcome also the Prime Minister's words with regard to our Polish allies and their forces in the field, and I hope we shall also never forget the other people who are on our side although they cannot speak so loudly, the Czechs. Many of the Germans, too, who cannot speak, are, I believe, really on our side. But the Poles to-day have their forces actually in the field and everybody knows the valour of the Polish nation. I have one final word to say on the question of our policy. We want to see a vigorous policy carried out both in the economic and in the diplomatic fields. I hope that the consultations with the Ministers and Ambassadors will be fruitful. We wish to see no extension of the war, we wish to bring it to an end as soon as possible, and we can do that by getting all the neutral nations to understand that the war concerns them because we are fighting for their lives as well as for our own.

GERMAN INVASION OF NORWAY AND DENMARK

9th April, 1940.

THE PRIME MINISTER (MR. CHAMBERLAIN) The House will be aware that Germany has to-day invaded Denmark and Norway. Ever since the beginning of the present War she has attempted to dominate Scandinavia and to control both the political and economic policy of the Scandinavian States. Her pressure on those States has been steadily increasing and as is now well known, she claimed and exercised the right to dictate their policy towards Finland during the Finnish-Soviet War. The House will recall that, in the statement which I made at the end of that war, on 19th March, I used the following words in speaking of the struggle.

"What is the result to Scandinavia? The security of Finland has gone but has the security of Norway and Sweden been preserved? On the contrary, the danger has been brought closer than ever to those two countries, till to-day it stands upon their doorsteps."

After expressing sympathy with those States to whom I said that the issue of war would not be a matter of indifference, I concluded—

"Nothing will or can save them but a determination to defend themselves and to join with others who are ready to aid them in their defence."

Some of my listeners then may have thought those words exaggerated, but now we see the fulfilment to the letter of the prophecy they contained. Since that date the situation has further developed. As was pointed out in the statement issued His Majesty's Government yesterday, the German Government have claimed and exercised the right to destroy neutral, and particularly Scandinavian ships on the seas around this country, by all the means in their power, but at the same time, they have insisted upon the strictest observation of the rules of neutrality where this would provide some advantage to them, as it did in Norwegian waters. The Allies then decided that they could not acquiesce indefinitely in this state of affairs, and having given notice to the Norwegian Government that they reserved the right to take such measures as might be necessary to redress the balance thus weighted against them, they laid minefields in Norwegian waters so as to prevent the unhindered passage of German traffic through them, while in no way interfering with normal Norwegian trade. At no time did the Allies contemplate any occupation of Scandinavian territory so long as it was not attacked by Germany. Any allegations by Germany to the contrary are pure invention and have no foundation in fact.

The German Government have now issued a statement to the effect that they have decided to take over the protection of Denmark and Norway. German motorised and armed forces crossed the Danish frontier at daybreak and a considerable area of Danish territory is in German occupation. Their troops are reported to have landed at Copenhagen this morning. His Majesty's Government have learned that the German Minister at Oslo, early to day, made a formal demand for the surrender of Norway to Germany, stating that in the event of refusal all resistance would be crushed. This demand, was, of course, immediately refused by the Norwegian Government, as they have officially declared. We have now heard that fighting has already started, and there are Press reports that Oslo and Christiansand have been bombed. German troops have landed on Norwegian territory at various places.

It is asserted by the German Government that their invasion of Norway was a reprisal for the action of the Allies in Norwegian territorial waters. This statement will, of course, deceive no one. So elaborate an operation, involving simultaneous landings at a number of ports by troops accompanied by naval forces, requires planning long in advance; and the information which is now coming to hand clearly indicates that it was not only planned, but was already in operation, before the mines were laid in Norwegian waters. The facts of the German operation, which are becoming public property, suffice in themselves to prove what I have just said. It is reported that, among others, the Norwegian port of Trondheim has been invaded by German armed forces this morning. The distance from the nearest German port, Cuxhaven, to Trondheim is nearly 700 miles; and, assuming that the expedition started immediately after the announcement of the mining

operations within Norwegian territorial waters they could not yet have arrived. There is, therefore, no doubt that the German plans for the invasion of Norway and Denmark were made and put into operation long before the Allied mining of Norwegian territorial waters.

It remains to say that His Majesty's Government have at once assured the Norwegian Government that in view of the German invasion of their country, His Majesty's Government have decided forthwith to extend their full aid to Norway, and have intimated that they will fight the war in full association with them. Powerful units of the Navy are at sea. Hon. Members will realise that it would not be in the public interest to give details at this stage as to any operations in which they are now engaged. Needless to say, we are facing this new menace to the independence of free peoples in the closest collaboration with the French Government, whose forces are operating together with our own. I have no doubt that this further rash and cruel act of aggression will redound to Germany's disadvantage, and contribute to her ultimate defeat.

MR. ATTLEE (Limehouse). I should like, first of all, to express what I believe is the feeling of all of us of our sympathy with the people of Denmark and of Norway, two of the most highly civilised nations in Europe, who are now attacked by the most barbarous. It is clear that adherence to a policy of strict neutrality does not save any State from being attacked by the German Government. It is abundantly clear that never have the German Government accepted the neutrality of these countries as entitling them to safety, because it is clear that the plans for their invasion must have been prepared a long time ahead, ready to be put into operation whenever the German Government so decided. It is another instance of utterly brutal aggression.

prompt swift and effective. In that action certainly we at any rate shall support the Government.

MR MANDER (Wolverhampton East). Has the Prime Minister any information with regard to the alleged attack by Germany of Bergen and Narvik? It is obviously in the minds of Members as a whole that it is a remarkable thing that this expedition should have taken place while the British Fleet held the seas. No doubt in due course some explanation of that will be given but at the moment it is extremely puzzling.

The other point I want to put is this. When the Russian attack on Finland took place there was an immediate meeting of the Council of the League of Nations. I wish to ask whether any proposal has been made from either Norwegian or other quarters that that precedent should be followed and similar action taken.

THE PRIME MINISTER. My information is that German forces have landed at Bergen. There have been some reports about a similar landing at Narvik but I am very doubtful whether those are correct. As to the actions of the Navy I am sure the House will wish to reserve its judgment until it is in possession of further information and that it certainly would not wish to make criticisms upon the action of the Navy. With regard to the meeting of the League of Nations no suggestion has yet been made to us about any meeting and I would say generally that first things must come first. There are other things which I think would be more effective than summoning a meeting of the League of Nations.

MR GALLACHER (Fife West). I tried to impress on the House at the time of Munich and now that disaster is threatening to come on the whole of Europe I want to ask whether it is possible to get this House representing as it does the people of the country seriously to discuss a complete change of Government in order to get a Government that will seek to save the young manhood of this country and bring the war to a speedy end instead of concerning itself with spreading the war. [Interruption]

SIR RICHARD ACLAND (Barnstaple). We cannot always prevent acts of aggression now as we know but I think it is important that this nation should take a consistent moral attitude to all acts of aggression. In the case of the German attack on Poland we used our full resources and in the case of the attack on Finland we passed a resolution at the League and did give a certain amount of material help while we were ready to give more. In this case now we are going to do all we can but there is another act of aggression which is going on in the world to-day and that is the Japanese aggression against China. [Interruption] It is all very well for Members to jeer at that. The people of this country will not understand it if the Government try to take one line in the case of one set of aggressors and an entirely different line in the case of another aggressor at the other end of the world.

MR THORNE (Plaistow). In view of the present temper of the House I think the best thing we can do is to adjourn now.

10th April 1940

THE PRIME MINISTER (MR CHAMBERLAIN) I do not propose to day to make any general statement on the naval aspects of the war, as I hope it will be possible for one to be made by my right hon Friend the First Lord of the Admiralty to-morrow when perhaps more information than we now possess will have come to hand. The House however will probably wish to hear the account which I have just received of the fierce action fought by the British destroyers against the German force in Narvik this morning. Five British destroyers steamed up the fiord and engaged six German destroyers of the latest and largest type, which were also supported by the shore batteries and guns newly mounted ashore. His Majesty's ship Hunter was sunk, and the Hardy was so severely injured that she had to run ashore and become a wreck. The Hotspur also received serious damage and the destroyer Hostile slight damage. The remaining vessel the Havock, was untouched.

After a most determined action against a superior force with larger and more modern ships and in the face of gunfire from the shore the damaged Hotspur withdrew covered by the other two destroyers. The enemy appeared in no condition to attempt pursuit. One 1 600 ton German destroyer was torpedoed, and believed sunk and three were left heavily hit and burning. It is perhaps not less important that six merchant ships, suspected of containing the unloaded stores of the German expedition were sunk in the action by the British destroyers. On the way out, they met the German ship Ravensfeld which was found to be carrying the reserve ammunition of the landed German forces. This vessel was blown up. The House will naturally not expect me to deal in any way with further operations.

MR J MORGAN Was not a heavy gale blowing at the same time giving added glory to the episode?

11th April 1940

THE FIRST LORD OF THE ADMIRALTY (MR CHURCHILL) The strange and unnatural calm of the last few weeks was violently broken on Monday morning by the German invasion of Norway and Denmark. This crime had, of course been long and elaborately prepared and it was actually set in motion in the last week of March. For several months past we have received information of large numbers of German merchant ships being fitted as transports and of numerous small vessels being assembled in various Baltic ports and also in the river mouth of the Elbe. But no one could tell when they would be used or against what peaceful country they would be used. Holland, Denmark, Norway and Sweden were as it seemed all equally liable to a sudden brutal capricious and in any case, unprovoked attack. Which would be selected as the first victim or when the blow would be struck remained inevitably, a matter of pure speculation.

The Nazi German Government is accustomed to spreading through its channels a continuous flow of threats and rumours. These are put forth by all their agents in neutral countries, by the "hangers-on" of their legations and by their and backers, wherever they may be found. [Interruption.] I am sure my remarks have, particularly, no personal aspect. All these countries have been threatened, and as the German Government are not restrained by law or scruple, and as they have an obvious preference for striking at the weak rather than the strong, all the small countries on their borders were, and still are, in a high state of alarm. Even those neutrals who have done the most to placate Germany, and have been the greatest aid to her, could not feel any sense of security that they would not be attacked without any reason or without any warning, swiftly overrun, reduced to bondage and pillaged of all their property, especially all eatables. Fear was, therefore, general in all these unfortunate countries, and none of them could tell, and none of us could tell, which one of them would be the next to be devoured.

In the small hours of Monday morning we learned that Norway and Denmark had drawn the unlucky numbers in this sinister lottery. Denmark, of course, had special reason for apprehension, not only because she was the nearest and the weakest of Germany's neighbours, but because she had a recent treaty with Germany guaranteeing her from all molestation and because she was engaged in active commerce both with Germany and Great Britain, the continuance of which in time of war had been foreseen by Germany, and was guaranteed by special trade arrangements the German and Danish Governments. This, obviously, placed her in a position of peculiar danger. The extraordinary configuration of the Norwegian western coast provides a kind of corridor, or covered way, as everyone knows, through which neutral trade and German ships of all kinds, warships and others, could be moved to and fro through the Allied blockade, within the territorial waters of Norway and Sweden, until they were under the effective protection of the German home Air Force in North Germany. They could go to and fro along this route without molestation.

The existence of this geographical and legal covered way has been the greatest disadvantage which we have suffered and the greatest advantage which Germany has possessed in her efforts to frustrate the British and Allied blockade. Warships moved up and down it as they thought it convenient. U-boats used it as they thought fit. Stray German liners and merchant ships, trying to get back to Germany from outer seas, followed this route, which is over 800 miles long, and can be entered or quitted at any convenient point. There has been no greater impediment to the blockade of Germany than this Norwegian corridor. It was so in the last war, and it has been so in this war. Therefore, the British Navy has been forced to watch an endless procession of German and neutral ships carrying contraband of all kinds to Germany, which

at any moment they could have stopped but which they were forbidden to touch by those very same conventions of international law which Germany, in this war, as in the last has treated with the utmost perfect contempt. During the last war when we were associated with the United States the Allies felt themselves so deeply injured by this covered way then being used specially for U boats setting out on their marauding expeditions that the British French and United States Governments together induced the Norwegians to lay a minefield in their territorial waters across the covered way in order to prevent the abuse by U boats of this channel. It was only natural that the Admiralty since this war began should have brought this precedent—although it is not exactly on all fours and there are some differences—this modern and highly respectable precedent to the notice of His Majesty's Government and should have urged that we should be allowed to lay a minefield of our own in Norwegian territorial waters in order to compel this traffic which was passing in and out to Germany to come out into the open sea and take a chance of being brought into the contraband control or being captured as enemy prize by our blockading squadrons and flotillas. It was only natural and it was only right that His Majesty's Government should have been long reluctant to incur the reproach of even a technical violation of international law. After all we are seeking to establish the reign of international law and anyone can see the dilemma upon which those who have to consider these matters are liable to be impaled in such a situation as that. It is intolerable that the good cause should suffer by respecting the conventions which those who champion the bad cause have profited by tearing to pieces. But gradually as this cruel deadly war has deepened and darkened the feeling grew that it was placing an undue burden upon the Allies to allow this traffic to continue and that it was intolerable to watch week after week the ships passing down this corridor carrying the iron ore to make the shells which will strike down the young men of France and Britain in the campaign of 1941.

of troops and ships had begun before the British and French mine-fields were laid. No doubt they suspected they were going to be laid. It must indeed have appeared incomprehensible to them that they had not been laid long before. They therefore decided in the last week of March to use the Norwegian corridor to send empty ore ships northward, filled with military stores and German soldiers, concealed below decks, in order at the given moment to seize the various ports on the Norwegian seaboard which they considered to have military value. They also set in motion the invading forces which they had long prepared against the innocent neutral Countries—or against two of the innocent neutral countries because there are others not yet affected—who had helped them in so many ways.

I here must say a word about Norway. We have the most profound sympathy with the Norwegian people. We have understood the terrible dilemma in which they have been placed. Their sentiments, like those of every other small country, were with the Allies. They writhed in helpless anger while scores of their ships were wantonly sunk and many hundreds of their sailors cruelly drowned. They realise fully that their future independence and freedom are bound up with the victory of the Allies. But the feeling of powerlessness in the ruthless grip of Nazi wrath made them hope against hope until the last moment that at least their soil and their cities would not be polluted by the tramping of German marching columns or their liberties and their livelihood stolen away by foreign tyrants. But this hope has been in vain. Another violent outrage has been perpetrated by Nazi Germany against a small and friendly Power, and the Norwegian Government and people are to-day in arms to defend their hearths and home. We shall aid them to the best of our ability, we shall conduct the war in common with them, and we shall make peace only when their rights and freedom are restored. In their very large, wild, mountainous country—freedom, it is said, dwells in the mountain—in their very large country, sparsely populated, but rugged and full of positions where free man can shelter and can fight, they should be able to maintain vigorous and prolonged resistance, costing enormous labour to those who wish to subjugate them to tyranny.

But what an example this Norwegian episode is to other neutral countries. What an example it is of the danger of supposing that friendly relations with Germany, or friendly assurances from Germany, or treaties of any kind, or friendly offices rendered to Germany, or advantages given to Germany—what a danger to suppose that any of these are the slightest protection against a murderous onslaught the moment it is thought by Germany that any advantage can be gained by such action. If the Norwegian Government had not been so very strict and severe in their neutrality against us and in leaving their corridor open to German operations and machinations, and if they had entered into confidential relations with us, it would have been very easy to give

them more timely and more opportune support than is now possible. It is not the slightest use blaming the Allies for not being able to give substantial help and protection to neutral countries if they are held at arm's length by the neutral countries until those countries are actually attacked on a scientifically prepared plan by Germany, and I trust that the fact that the strict observance of neutrality by Norway has been a contributory cause of the sufferings to which she is now exposed and in the limits of aid which we can give her will be meditated upon by other countries who may to-morrow, or a week hence, or a month hence find themselves the victims of an equally elaborately worked out staff plan for their destruction and enslavement.

I now address myself to the question which I believe has been asked in some quarters, What is the Navy doing? And I will endeavour to answer it to the best of my ability so far as it relates to the past and to the present, but the House would not expect me to lift the veil which should properly and discreetly cover the future operations or operations which are in progress at this moment. As I told the House in the Debate upon the Navy Estimates we were deprived during all the long winter months of the great strategic advantages of Scapa Flow, but during all that time we laboured night and main to make that base a safe and sure home for the Fleet. About five weeks ago the Home Fleet returned to Scapa Flow and has been resting there or operating from there ever since. We have been exposed to continual air raid alarms and numerous air raids, but we have now very powerful anti-aircraft batteries in action, together with various other methods of defence, and very good arrangements have been made with the Royal Air Force and with our home squadrons of the Fleet Air Arm, so that an adequate number of squadrons are disposed within striking distance.

In all, there have been five raids on Scapa Flow—many alarms but five raids. My right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition, who paid a visit to that spot, was, I gather, by accident, so unfortunate as just to miss one of those exhilarating experiences. In all five raids. In the first a cruiser was hit aft which necessitated several weeks of repair, but no more than that. Otherwise, up to the time I am speaking—there was an air raid warning this morning and I do not wish at all, remembering the hon. Lady's fear, to make anything in the nature of prophecy, but we must discard superstition in these days—up to the time of speaking there has been no vessel hit or damaged in Scapa Flow, no objective of the slightest military importance has been hit on shore and very few people have been hurt. The enemy has shown himself increasingly gun shy in his attacks on Scapa and this is hardly to be wondered at, since the batteries, especially when reinforced by the powerful batteries of the Fleet, can deliver what is probably for the heaviest concentration of anti-aircraft fire in the world. It is a tremendous fire, and in the latest raid, which took place last night, at dusk, sixty aircraft attacked in successive waves without

doing the slightest damage although they themselves suffered the loss of at least six aircraft the credit for which is divided between—I might almost say disputed between—the batteries and the very skilfully used air squadrons. We are ready to fight this matter at Scapa Flow. It is of the utmost importance to the Fleet to make themselves comfortable there and the repeated attacks give a practice to the batteries against high speed aircraft which no towed target which we have been able to devise can possibly supply. It is most necessary to have further encounters between the batteries and enemy aircraft and between the Fleet and enemy aircraft if our gunnery is to develop its full efficiency and of course we must always be prepared when we run risks for occasional losses.

The Fleet was therefore in instant readiness at Scapa Flow when on Sunday night news was received from the air reconnaissance ranges over the whole of the North Sea—that German battle cruisers with a number of other cruisers and vessels and destroyers were out at sea and moving very swiftly northwards. The Commander in Chief immediately put to sea to find them and bring them to action. At the same time independently of this a strong British naval force was approaching Narvik in order to lay a minefield off the Norwegian coast for the purposes which I described to the House a few moments ago. The minefield was laid according to plan at daylight on Monday morning. The task of the minelayers accomplished they withdrew to the westward in order to avoid the risk of any collision with Norwegian war vessels maintaining their neutrality which they had been specially enjoined to respect and take every precaution against infringing.

One of the destroyers of this northern force which went to lay mines lost a man overboard on Sunday afternoon and stayed behind some time to pick him up. This destroyer the *Gloworm* was proceeding northwards to rejoin its force when at eight o'clock on Monday morning she saw first one and then two enemy destroyers which she engaged. She then reported an unknown enemy ship before her to the northward. These incidents came to us one by one at a few minutes intervals as they occurred but the last message ended abruptly and we can only conclude that the *Gloworm* has been sunk by the greatly superior forces of the enemy which she had to encounter. The *Gloworm's* light has been quenched but there is no reason why a large proportion of her crew should not have been saved if the ordinary humanity of fighting men which is a different thing from the humanity of some Governments has been practised by the enemy. This chance encounter showed that major elements of the enemy navy were at sea and that considerable events were in train.

Since then fighting has been continuous night and day without stopping and is going on now—a widely dispersed but none the less a general action on between large numbers of German ships and aircraft and such forces as we are able to bring into action. A great deal has been reported in the newspapers a great deal of what has taken place and even more than has taken place because,

of course, we have not reoccupied the ports on the Norwegian coast. These are rumours which come from neutral sources and are naturally given currency. But the House has read a great deal of the truth and a great deal more than the truth in the last few days. I shall merely try to summarise the principal naval incidents. During Monday morning it looked as though the enemy forces which had sunk the *Glowworm*, and which contained German battle cruisers and other enemy ships, would be caught between our forces in the North and the main Home Fleet, both of which were superior. However, they got away and here I must make a digression about the conditions of sea war.

You may look at the map and see flags stuck in at different points and consider that the result will be certain, but when you get out on the sea, with its vast distances, its storms and mists, and with night coming on and all the uncertainties which exist, you cannot possibly expect that the kind of conditions which would be appropriate to consider in respect of the movements of Armies have any application to the chance and haphazard conditions of collisions by ships of war at sea. On Tuesday the Fleet was cruising to the southward about the level of Bergen, when, during the afternoon, it was attacked continuously by German aircraft. The usual tales were put out by the German wireless of several battleships and cruisers being sunk or seriously damaged. I know that some of my friends were concerned at these blatant exaggerations. Actually, two cruisers were slightly damaged by splinters, but this did not at all interfere with their work, and they are still with the Fleet at their stations. One very heavy bomb hit the flagship, the *Rodney*, but her very strong deck armour resisted the impact, and she was not affected in any way by the explosion except that three officers and seven men were injured. As far as the structure of our ships of war is concerned, this incident must be regarded as satisfactory. The cruiser *Aurora*, which had joined the Fleet, was subjected to five successive bombing attacks, all of which were pressed home with courage and all of which failed, but a destroyer, the *Gurkha*, which was accompanying her and to some extent escorting her, was hard hit and listed heavily and sank after four and a half hours, during which the crew or almost all of the crew were rescued. The same afternoon the destroyer *Zulu* sank a German U-boat off the Orkneys.

Meanwhile, far to the north off Narvik, on this Tuesday morning, at daybreak, the *Renown*, one of our battle cruisers, perceived the *Scharnhorst* and a 10 000 ton *Hipper* class cruiser, which had evidently come up with the force the day before, in the distance dimly. Amid snowstorms, a tempestuous day, sea running high gales blowing furiously, our battle cruiser opened fire at 18,000 yards. After three minutes the enemy replied, but almost immediately 'turned away'. After nine minutes the *Renown* observed hits on the forward structure of the German battle cruiser, and thereafter her whole armament stopped firing. Thereafter her after turret began firing under local control. The speed of the battle cruiser

maintained was very great and the *Renown* had to push to twenty four knots through very heavy seas breaking over her forward turrets and guns. After a further two minutes of firing a vertical column of smoke from what they call a possible second hit was observed on the *Scharnhorst* which then turned away and directly retired at a high speed without further firing. During this period a shell had passed through our vessel about the water line without bursting. We had something like that in the case of the *Exeter* and it seems to show that Nazi workmanship is not all of a piece. A second shell went through the foremast carrying away the main aerial. There were no casualties on board the *Renown*. The destroyers which were with her were unable to keep up in the heavy seas at the speed at which she was going.

The 10 000 ton cruiser *Hipper* now drew across the battleship *Scharnhorst*. The two ships of this class the *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau* are of 25 000 tons and most formidable vessels. The *Hipper* threw a smoke screen across her to cover her retreat. The *Renown* opened fire on the *Hipper* which turned away. Both ships now retired at high speed the *Hipper* swinging to fire a broadside from time to time and also dodging. Firing was intermittent as all the time snowstorms were sweeping across and closing the view, and the sea was running very high but in the end we much regret to say that they succeeded in leaving us. Firing finally ceased at 29 000 yards when they became quite invisible. Someone will say. If you had all this news on Tuesday morning why have you been saving it up for the House of Commons? All I can say is that I have been most anxious to obtain this information because the *Renown* signals broke off when they became interesting, and we never heard another word from her until a few hours ago upon that subject. Although she made various signals she did not think it necessary to tell us what had happened. I must emphasise this, that when sailors are fighting they busy themselves so much upon that, and take so much interest in that that they quite forget for a long time to tell us what they are doing which causes some embarrassment to the Admiralty sometimes and even more to the Minister of Information.

I am still on Tuesday. On Tuesday night we gave orders to our destroyers to blockade the West Fjord that great stretch of water fifty to sixty miles long leading up to Narvik. Our orders to those destroyers were to attack the enemy who had got in there and especially to destroy the store ships in which they had smuggled their soldiers up the Norwegian corridor and on which they must depend for working up the efficiency of their defences. There were six destroyers and a U boat reported and moreover it was to be expected that they had landed a certain number of guns in the twenty four hours they had been there. The Germans are very quick in landing and making themselves fortified, they are very nimble about these things. From what we heard at the Admiralty late on Tuesday night we thought the operation so hazardous that at one o'clock in the morning we told the captain

of the destroyer flotilla that he must be the sole judge of whether to attack or not, and we would support him, whatever he did and whatever happened. In these circumstances, Captain Warburton-Lee entered with five destroyers and attacked the enemy destroyers and such guns as they could have landed in the interval. In the beginning, all that they reported to us was what they had lost—nothing more—and I let it go out, because I do not think we ought to have a kind of mealy-mouthed attitude towards these matters. We have embarked on this war, and we must take our blows. Therefore, I put the report out, although there was nothing to relieve it, as it were. We are not children to be kept in the dark, and we can take what is coming to us as well as any other country.

As soon as the further report was received at about one o'clock, I prepared it for the Prime Minister, who immediately gave it to the House of Commons and to the country, through the Press, at the same time. The moment we get any news, be it bad or good, once we can rely on it, we shall present it to Parliament, the broadcast and the Press. I am all for propaganda and publicity, but the best propaganda is results, and I must say that I think these are coming to hand in no unsatisfactory manner. The result of this hard, fierce fight in the Narvik Fjord—half the combatant vessels were knocked out on each side—is worthy of any of the records which are preserved with such respect in the long history of the Navy. What was gained was the destruction of these store ships, as well as the crippling of the force, and on the way back the two destroyers, who were escorting their wounded comrade out of the Fjord, unpursued by the enemy, who had received an equal battering, got the *Rauenfels*, full of reserve ammunition with which, I suppose, it was intended to turn Narvik into a kind of Sebastopol or Gibraltar. This ship was blown up, and we must regard that as simplifying the task which obviously might be among those which lie ahead of us.

Now I come to Wednesday. On that day a very determined attack was made by two waves of twelve each of the Royal Air Force—whose flying in every direction, as it were, for the reconnaissance and protection of the Royal Navy has been unceasing, and to whom, on behalf of their naval comrades, I tender a most sincere expression of recognition—on two German cruisers sheltering in the Bergen Fjord and covering German troops that had been landed there. One of these light cruisers was hit, and we have not seen anything of her since. She may be at the bottom or hiding in some fjord, but subsequent reconnaissance has not revealed her presence. At dusk on Wednesday, the Fleet Air Arm came on to the scene for the first time in this war. They have been very anxious to come into action with their Skuas, which are perhaps not the latest pattern of aircraft. They have a long range, and they flew from the Orkneys and attacked the remaining German cruiser at Bergen, which was moored alongside. Sixteen of them attacked in successions of three s, all making low

bombing dives and casting their 500 pound bombs at the lowest point. They secured three hits and out of the sixteen fifteen returned. Then a little later when a reconnaissance aircraft was sent over no cruiser was seen where this one had been lying—only a streak of oil about a mile long smearing the surface of the harbour. It looks as if a result has been obtained.

To day Thursday at daybreak, the torpedo-carrying aircraft of the Fleet Air Arm eighteen in number have attacked enemy shipping in the harbour of Trondheim. We had hoped to get a *Hipper* class cruiser which was reported certainly to be there. She had however vanished in the night and all we got was a destroyer which was hit by a torpedo. This form of attack by torpedo from the air is very old. I saw it when I was First Lord before the last war and was deeply interested in it. It was used once at the Dardanelles. It carries with it great hopes and possibilities which have never been fully developed but we must have more practice and experience in the use of this novel although not new and unaccustomed weapon. Thus we hope to obtain as the fighting proceeds during the summer.

In my task of answering the question, "What is the Navy doing?" I am getting too near the range of current and pending operations to be able to make any further report to the House but I hope I have to some extent answered the question which has been asked and shown that the Navy has not been idle or negligent and that it is actively proceeding on the tasks confided to it by Parliament. I shall look forward to making a further statement to Parliament a little later on. I will however venture to make a few general observations and attempt to survey the results up to date. When we speak of the command of the seas that does not mean that the Royal Navy and its French Ally command every part of the seas at the same moment or at every moment. It only means that we can make our will prevail ultimately in any part of the seas which may be selected for operations and thus indirectly we can make our will prevail in every part of the seas. That is what command of the seas means. Anything more foolish than to suppose that the life and strength of the Royal Navy—which allow me to remind the House is engaged in bringing in through the U boats the immense traffics of this country now bounding up in their fullness as the U boat is gradually brought under control for that is what we are doing all the time while this is going on on the other side of the Island—anything I say more foolish than to suppose that the life and strength of the Royal Navy should have been expended in ceaselessly patrolling up and down the Norwegian and Danish coasts a target for the U boats wearing out their crews and machinery on the chance that Hitler would launch a blow like this—anything more foolish than that nobody can imagine. I say with great respect that a man who makes such a suggestion is hardly qualified to offer advice to the nation in these serious times.

In my view which is adhered to by my skilled advisers Herr Hitler

has committed a grave strategic error in spreading the war so far to the North and in forcing the Scandinavian people or peoples, out of their attitude of neutrality. We have suffered from nothing in our blockade policy so much as the denial of the Norwegian coast, and that cursed corridor is now closed for ever. Hitler has affected with his Germans lodgements of various strengths at many points of the Norwegian coasts and he has felled with a single hammer blow the inoffensive Kingdom of Denmark but we shall take all we want off this Norwegian coast now, with an enormous increase in the facility and in the efficiency of our blockade. We are also at this moment occupying the Faroe Islands which belong to Denmark and which are a strategic point of high importance, and whose people showed every disposition to receive us with warm regard. We shall shield the Faroe Islands from all the severities of war and establish ourselves there conveniently by sea and air until the moment comes when they will be handed back to the Crown and people of a Denmark liberated from the foul thralldom in which they have been plunged by the German aggression. The question of Iceland needs further consideration, because Iceland is, as it were, a dominion of the Danish Kingdom. What I can say about Iceland at the moment is that no German will be allowed to set foot there with impunity.

In the upshot, it is the considered view of the Admiralty that we have greatly gained by what had occurred in Scandinavia and in Northern waters in a strategic and military sense. For myself, I consider that Hitler's action in invading Scandinavia is as great a strategic and political error as that which was committed by Napoleon in 1807 or 1808, when he invaded Spain. Hitler has isolated the independence and soil of virile peoples dwelling in very large and expansive countries capable of maintaining, with British and French aid, prolonged resistance to his soldiers and his Gestapo. He has almost doubled the efficiency of the Allied blockade. He has made a whole series of commitments upon the Norwegian coast for which he will now have to fight, if necessary, during the whole summer, against powers possessing vastly superior naval forces and able to transport them to the scenes of action more easily than he can. I cannot see any counter-advantage which he has gained except the satisfaction of another exercise of the brutal lust of unbridled power. I cannot see any satisfaction which he has gained which is any adequate offset to these substantial and enduring facts. Grieved as we all are at the suffering and misery which are now extended to wider areas, I must declare to the House that I feel that we are greatly advantaged by what has occurred, providing we act with unceasing and increasing vigour to turn to the utmost profit the strategic blunder into which our mortal enemy has been provoked. I have two things more to say before I sit down. The first is a very serious thought. Everyone must recognise the extraordinary precision and the reckless gambling which have flung the whole German Fleet out upon the savage seas of war as if it were a mere

counter, to be cast away for a particular operation. We and French are far stronger than the German Navy. We have enough to maintain control of the Mediterranean, and, at the same time, we can carry on all our operations in the North Sea. But out the very much smaller forces of the German Navy, most grievous losses have been already sustained. Four German cruisers—the Norwegian batteries have taken their toll—that is to say, nearly half their total pre-war strength and much more than their existing strength in cruisers, have been sunk, and a number of German destroyers, together with several more U-boats have been destroyed, all since Sunday.

Up to the time I speak those losses have been sustained by the German Navy. After all, a navy is an integral organisation, with its battleships, cruisers and its destroyers, and that navy must be regarded as deeply mutilated in respect of this extraordinarily important and indeed indispensable cruiser element. Our submarines, which, I can assure the House, were by no means asleep have taken heavy toll from the German transports and store ships now crossing into Scandinavia. We have given them the fullest liberty of action in all cases where humanity does not impose restraints. All German ships in the Skaggerak and the Kattegat will be sunk, and by night all ships will be sunk, as opportunity serves. We are not going to allow the enemy to supply their armies across these waters with impunity. They have already ordered all merchant vessels out of this area, and in this respect our advice coincides with theirs. We hope to take unceasing toll. Up to the present nearly a dozen ships, some of large have been sunk or captured, either in the Skaggerak and the Kattegat, or in other parts of the North Sea, or in attempting to bring supplies to the forces which were landed at Narvik. The Norwegian batteries have had their successes, and I must consider the German Fleet crippled in important respects.

But, Mr. Speaker—and this is the gravity of the thought which I venture to submit to the House—the very recklessness with which Hitler and his advisers have cast the interests of the German Navy upon the wild waters to meet all that moves thereon—this very recklessness makes me feel that these audacious, costly operations may be only the prelude to far larger events which impend on land. We have probably arrived now at the first main crunch of the war. But we certainly find no reason in the fact of what has just happened, and still less in our own hearts, to deter us from entering upon any further trials that may lie before us. While we will not prophesy or boast about battles still to be fought, we feel ourselves ready to encounter the utmost malice of the enemy and to devote all our life strength to achieve the victory in what is a world cause.

One word more. There never was a time when the I treated more kindly by the British nation or by the House or when it was regarded with more admiration, nay, I will say affection. It is worthy of your confidence. But showing confidence in the

Navy does not only mean applauding it in good days when some glittering success may be proclaimed. It means that those, and they are legion, who repose their faith in our sailors and their leaders will not falter or become distressed if for three or four days at a time, silence and darkness and dubious news lie over the sea or come from the sea, and that each one who has that confidence and faith will make it his duty to sustain those who are of lesser faith. Each of them will have their part in the great drama of human progress, now so vividly unfolded before us.

MR A V ALEXANDER (Sheffield, Hillsborough) . . . The First Lord has, I think, with considerable courage, in view of the stories which have appeared in the Press laid the position before us, as far as he is able to do so having regard to the general public interest and the proper safeguarding of any operations which may be in progress. In those circumstances I hope that we shall not—any of us—require to go into a long Debate on the operations now in progress. I feel at the same time that the First Lord has been wise in warning us, as he did towards the end of his speech, that the operations in which we are engaged, arising out of the wanton, unprovoked and brutal attack upon Norway and Denmark, mark a crucial point in the great war in which we are engaged. Our comments, short as they may be, must, therefore, be governed by a sense of the crucial nature of those operations at the moment.

The right hon Gentleman has, rightly, paid a tribute to the Norwegian nation. What was said from below the Gangway the other day is, I think, quite true—that the Norwegians are among the most highly-civilised people in the world. They have yearned for peace, they had organised for peace. They had left perhaps too late their attempts to keep complete neutrality, in the hope that peace might come to them. I am sure the whole House extends sympathy to them to day and hopes that the Allies will be able to render them early and effective assistance. I may be excused for saying a word about Denmark, because of the difficulty of the situation in which the Danish people are placed and the friendships which many of my hon Friends on these Benches so greatly value in that country. We would like the Prime Minister of Denmark and his colleagues—many of whom indeed I think all of whom, up to a couple of days ago were very largely drawn from the same class as that represented on this side of the House, and who are filled with our general social inspiration and have the same general social objectives—to know how much we feel for them in the position in which they find themselves to day. I hope that what has been said by the First Lord will be an encouragement to them. I hope that what he said with regard to the Faroe Islands and Iceland in relation to the Kingdom and people of Denmark will be carried out and that our comrades in Denmark will feel convinced that once we have finished this fight, we shall see to it that their independence and their rights are restored.

In view of the crucial point which we have reached in the war, I should like next to make reference to some of the elements with

which we have to deal in this country—small, perhaps, in relation to the total population but very vocal. I suggest that we reflect on the fate of Norway and Denmark. They might not only what has been said by speakers on the other side of the House, but what we have always said in our endeavours to deal with this question from this side of the House—that what happened in Norway and Denmark is only prevented at the moment from happening to this great free people here by our own determination to defend our liberty, and by the action of our Forces and those of our Allies, effectively to do so, by sea, air and land. I would say this to all my colleagues in the working-class organisations with which I am connected. I feel that we have now been brought right up against the facts of the fight in which this country is engaged. I am convinced by my daily contact with my own people, that the ruthless and callous attacks which Hitler has once more displayed, in breach of his treaties and promises, do not react upon the workers of this country as he perhaps thinks they will or as his expert propagandist on the wireless hopes they will. At the same time I should like to take this opportunity, because of the picture the First Lord of the Admiralty has put to us in relation to what have been constant rumours in the last few days, of warning all our people to beware of rumours. I would much rather exercise a little patience and have the real vetted truth when it is available . . .

There is, however, another point to which I should like to refer. The events of this week prove, perhaps more conclusively than has yet been the case, that there are only two choices to be made before any neutral countries anywhere in the danger zone. Either they must now make up their minds that they will have to accept domination which may be permanent domination, from the Germany of the new and developing type of the Nazi régime, or they must march with the Allies. If they march with the Allies at the end of the conflict those who fight with us now, and those who have been already subjugated, can be certain of the retention and of the restoration of their independence and freedom, for they have no such prospect of enjoyment of coming happiness and independence to look forward to if they are to be the next victims of the kind of aggression we have seen this week.

This evening I would say no more than this. The First Lord if he hits hard has never been afraid of just criticism, and he will not misunderstand us in the course of this very serious thing that is going on to-day and when the Royal Navy is putting up such a brave show, if we say to him that we are glad he gave the note to his colleagues in the House of Commons at the end of his speech—that in this battle we have to be insistent and increasing all the time in the vigour with which we prosecute this fight. I think I am speaking for the whole House when I say that, if the note he put into that part of the end of his speech is to indicate the real type of action of the Government in the future, then they can look to support for that type of action and vigour in prosecuting

the war from all Members of the House. What we are most afraid of is lest the vigour and the intentions expressed by the First Lord should not be continuous day by day, in season and out of season because of any lack of heart or spirit in other elements in the Government. And so as in the Royal Navy in the air, and on the home front, we ask the Government, while we give credit for what is being done to put into this fight every ounce of vigour and to put into their preparations for the fight more intensive and more skilled organisation than perhaps we have yet seen. We believe that if we are to go through this great fight and retain our independence and our liberty and restore conditions under which that liberty can flourish in Europe, all and not part of our effort has to go in.

SIR ARCHIBALD SINCLAIR (Caithness and Sutherland) First, let me express my agreement with the concluding passages of the speech of the right hon. Gentleman the Member for Hillsborough (Mr. Alexander). It is when the Government's actions have been weak and hesitating that we feel bound to criticise them but when they show strength and vigour and give us assurance of firmness in their policy then indeed we feel called upon to support them. Since the Prime Minister made his statement to the House two days ago it had been made abundantly clear that the plain ordinary, law abiding people all over the world are at one with us in condemning the brutal and audacious aggression of Nazi Germany against Denmark and Norway. To day we do well to rejoice and we shall not be alone in our rejoicing at the castigation which the German aggressor is receiving at the hands of the Royal Navy and the Royal Air Force. We deeply regret the loss of gallant lives and our sympathy goes out to those who mourn them but we are proud and grateful for the courage fighting spirit and skill in action which have been so brilliantly displayed by officers and men of all ranks of the Royal Navy and of the Royal Air Force.

Let us welcome too our new Ally in the defence of the common cause of civilised Europe—our Norwegian Ally. Their spirit is shown in the achievements of the brave Norse gunners in the forts of Christiansand and Oslo Fjord and the admiration we all feel for the people of Norway on account of their mastery of the arts of peace and civilisation is deepened by the firmness with which they have met the onslaught of invasion by an enemy of overwhelming strength and by the coolness of their gunners who cut off from their base, surrounded by the enemy and attacked by some of the most powerful units of the German fleet, fought back until they sank the German ships.

Now there rests on the Government the heavy responsibility of ensuring that help is sent in time and in sufficient force to be effective. The German strategy may well prove to have been audacious to the point of recklessness. In a Debate on Finland the other day I referred to the impression made by many recent events on the minds of neutrals that while the Germans are evil,

they are swift, terrible and efficient, and that while we are slow, vacillating and ineffective. Now is the time, by prompt and vigorous action, to efface that impression once for all.

I would ask the House to consider for one moment what will be the effect on public opinion of the impact of these events. There are two possible and opposite dangers, the danger of defeatism and war weariness on the one hand and the danger of over-confidence and complacency on the other. I have never hidden from the House that in my opinion the second danger is infinitely greater than the first. I do not believe that people yet sufficiently realise how tremendous is our task and how formidable and real are the dangers by which we are encompassed. Ministers have not sufficiently played their part—I am sorry to say this to the First Lord of the Admiralty, because he is one who has played his part, but some of his colleagues are not playing their part—in bringing these realities home to the public. It is no service to the people of this country or to the common cause to minimise the effect of Germany's latest coup. Not only iron ore but ferromanganese molybdenum, and other products of Norway are indispensable to us for the manufacture of munitions and to sustain our industry and export trade. These operations in Norway are not a side show. Tremendous issues turn on the results of the fight during the next few days, and the public ought to know that.

Denmark will give to Germany bacon and butter and, I see, it is stated in the newspapers this morning, nearly 250,000 tons of oil. I am sure it must have passed through the minds of many hon. Members who read that statement that it was an astonishing risk to run to allow this vast stock of oil to accumulate in the country of so small and weak a neutral neighbour of Germany as Denmark. Now it may be quite true—in the long run I think it will prove to be true—that the occupation of Denmark will on balance be a positive disadvantage to Germany from the economic standpoint although the strategic advantage is indisputable. On the other hand, it is certainly going to be very inconvenient for us, and in these circumstances to tell the public that all will go on as before and that we can draw from Canada, New Zealand and the Balkans as much bacon and butter as we used to receive from Denmark and that we can eat just as much of everything as before must be the wrong policy. Surely it would be much better to tell the public that the loss of Danish supplies means that we must make greater sacrifices and cut down our rations still further. To import the same quantities from Canada and New Zealand would be a misuse of our limited sources of shipping. His Majesty's Government ought now to think out afresh what rations we can afford and adapt the plans of the Ministries of Agriculture and Food accordingly. It ought to be done promptly before the plans of the Ministry of Agriculture for next year are settled.

I would say, Do not prophesy smooth things to the people. Keep a firm grip on reality. Tell them the truth, however hard it is, for it will only stiffen their determination to see this thing through to the end. Indeed, the tremendous and dramatic events off the coast of Norway are only the prelude to events which will be still more formidable and decisive. We cannot rule out the possibility that the attack on Norway is only a feint, and that when our attention is distracted there the main German blow will fall elsewhere. Already the newspapers are warning us to watch German troop movements on the frontiers of the Balkans. I hope that His Majesty's Government will not allow their attention to be distracted from the Western Front, which is and will continue to be the main, if not necessarily the most active, theatre of the war. Here, again, I should have thought that it would have been a good plan to lift a corner of the veil and give the public some idea of the colossal forces and the immense stores of war material of which Germany disposes on the frontiers of Holland, Belgium and France. When I hear responsible Ministers and public servants saying that Hitler has "missed the bus" and that we have turned the corner, I am not impressed. I would far rather listen to an intelligent appreciation of the enemy's formidable strength and to assurances as definite and precise as in the public interest they can be made, that we are doing our utmost to match it. The people of this country have a well founded faith in the power of France and Britain to win the war. They know that we must win the war if we are to save not only Europe but Britain itself from destruction, and to that end there is no sacrifice they are not prepared to make.

Mr. BOOTHBY (Aberdeen and Kincardine, Eastern): Even when operations are going on I do not think any harm is done if hon. Members exercise a due sense of responsibility, if on an occasion of this kind one or two hon. Members express their views. I gather that there is a feeling in the House that nobody ought to be allowed to speak. I want to say only two things. In spite of what the First Lord said, I still think that the methods by which the news was given out yesterday, and particularly to the B.B.C., was disastrous. It only spread in every quarter alarm and despondency which proved to be totally unnecessary.

There is the other side of the picture as well. During the last 24 hours the public through the newspapers and the radio have been deluged with stories that Narvik, Bergen and Trondheim have been occupied by British troops. Even to the most amateur strategist it would appear to have been impossible to have achieved that in so short a time. I suggest that the Government ought to take some steps to secure that rumours of this kind, which naturally set up hopes unjustifiably in the minds of the public—which will be a little dashed by the First Lord's statement this afternoon—should not be broadcast without at least a warning or a denial from the British Government. It is not necessary in these times

to raise or to dash the hopes of the people, and both these things have been done during the last 48 hours

MR R C MORRISON (Tottenham North) I want to endorse what the hon. Member for East Aberdeen (Mr Booth) has said. I listened to the wireless at seven and eight o'clock yesterday morning and the impression made on my mind was that the Norwegian Government were engaged in negotiations with Germany with a view to not putting up a fight, that the negotiations had been going on all night and that there was a meeting in the early hours of the morning. The impression that I got—and my neighbours got it too—was that Norway was to be in the same position as Denmark and would not put up a fight. The Government ought to do something to try and prevent these incorrect impressions from being given in the news.

VISCOUNTESS ASTOR (Plymouth Sutton) I want to make a protest against the appalling news that went out yesterday. One has only to know a Service town to realise the dreadful effect on it of the news we have been getting from the B.B.C. I want to put this to the Prime Minister. Nobody knows what is going on in the Ministry of Information. Is the right hon. Gentleman responsible for the news that goes to the papers? That Ministry has had a bad record and it has been one long line of calamity. What went on yesterday and even this morning has filled the whole country with gloom, and people are really beginning to lose confidence in the Government on that point—and on many other points, but on that point in particular, not because they distrust the Prime Minister, but because they feel that he is not a wise selector of men.

What I would ask the Prime Minister to remember is that the people mistrust the papers but do not mistrust the B.B.C. Therefore I feel there ought to be some co-ordination between the Ministry of Information and the B.B.C. There ought to be one person in control.

One of the tragic things about being a Prime Minister is that you have to do very disagreeable things, because if you do not do them you will never win the war. You have to get rid of your "duds," whether they are your dearest friends or not. I do not envy a man in that position, but we have to remember what happened in the last war in the case of the Asquith Government. It was not very pleasant to do some of the things which had to be done then, but it was realised that unless there were changes we should not win the war. We do not want a change of Government but we do want to feel that when there is a sweep there will be a clean sweep, that it will not be a case of shuffling Ministers round, what you call 'musical chairs'.

I hope the Prime Minister will realise that great as is confidence we have in him we feel that the case of the Ministry of Information alone is enough to make him see that there is something in this question of the selection of Ministers. Things

must not go out as they did yesterday. Hon Members should have seen these mothers of sailors as I saw them yesterday to realise that this putting out of bad news false news, is criminal, really criminal in war-time. It has happened too often. I am glad that our leaflets are worse than useless that they have done more harm than good. That is what the experts say who come back from Germany. I have not found a single person who thought our leaflets were any good.

Miss RATHBONE (Combined English Universities) Until a few minutes ago I had not the slightest intention of rising, and do so only because I feel that the Noble Lady the Member for the Sutton Division (Viscountess Astor) has struck a note which needed to be struck, and which could perhaps be best struck by those who are not personally concerned. I want to say how much many of us feel the danger that changes in the Ministry are influenced too much by the likes and dislikes of the Prime Minister. It is very difficult for anyone who is conceivably an aspirant for office to say that kind of thing, and therefore it is left to those like myself who cannot possibly be regarded as seeking office. I sometimes wonder whether the Prime Minister realises how often among those who are his personal admirers there is the complete conviction that appointments to the Ministry are too much influenced by his personal dislikes and likes and by his determination—and a very large share in this is attributed to the Chief Whip—not to allow anyone to come into the Ministry who has ever opposed or criticised, especially on the question of the Munich Pact.

I ask hon Members who resent hearing that kind of thing to ask themselves this question. Suppose that a year ago any of their constituents had asked them to make a list of those who were the coming men in the Conservative party, the coming young men, the men who have shown energy, courage, initiative, originality of thought, and distinction in expression. Suppose anyone had made such a list. Would there be one person in that list who has recently been put into the Ministry? I shall not mention names because that would be invidious and for obvious reasons objectionable. I shall not say whom we would regard as supposedly weak junior members of the Government and whom we think are the abler men who might have taken their places. Those who have taken a deep interest in international affairs and questions connected with home defence during the last few years cannot help being struck by the fact that those who have shown courage in opposition and independence of mind, who have criticised where they thought criticism was needed, even when they have done it without any suspicion of malice, and taking risks of their future career, have been blackballed. Not one of them has been put into the Ministry. I am speaking entirely of the Members of parties which support the Government. [Hon Members: "Churchill"] Oh, of course, there are two exceptions—the First Lord of the Admiralty and the Secretary of State for

the Dominions. Why were those exceptions made? Because the Government could not have dared not to make those two exceptions. It was because public opinion demanded it and demanded it with such an insistent voice that it could not be ignored. That is why I am speaking to-day and why I suppose, the Noble Lady opposite spoke. The public has got to know of these things—the public who know that we are fighting for our lives and who know that national unity is important, but who feel that it is right not to bar out criticism and reasoned opposition when there are grounds for these things. We feel that here is something which is the canker at the root. There is a fear that the Prime Minister and the Chief Whip and perhaps some of his colleagues are influenced by old grudges and personal affections, and do not obey that prayer which we make every day to be delivered from all private interests, prejudices and partial affections.

2nd May, 1940

THE PRIME MINISTER The House will remember that some three months ago we had made preparations for the despatch of an Allied force to the assistance of Finland. The possibility of reaching Finland was dependent upon the collaboration of the Governments of Norway and Sweden and realising that even their acquiescence in the passage of Allied troops might involve them in an invasion by Germany we prepared other forces to go to their assistance in that contingency. It did not escape our attention that in such a case Trondheim and other western parts of Norway as well as the aerodrome at Stavanger might well be the subject of attack by Germany and accordingly further forces again were made ready to occupy these places. I should however make it clear that the instructions to the commanders of these forces provided that they were only to proceed to the occupation in one of two conditions—either that they were invited to do so by the Norwegian Government or that Norwegian neutrality had already been violated.

The House is aware that permission to send troops to Finland through Norway and Sweden was refused and after a certain period the greater part of the forces which had been accumulated were dispersed since both they and the ships which were allocated for their transport were wanted elsewhere. About a month ago however it was decided that certain small forces should be kept in readiness to occupy Norwegian Western ports at short notice in case of an act of aggression by Germany against South Norway. It will be noted again that any action contemplated by us on Norwegian soil was conditional upon prior violation of Norwegian neutrality by Germany.

It has been asked how it was that, in spite of these preparations Germany was able to forestall us. The answer is simple. It was by long planned, carefully-elaborated treachery against an un-armed and almost unarmed people. We had been aware for

many months that the Germans were accumulating transports and troops in Baltic ports, and that these troops were constantly being practised in embarkation and disembarkation. It was evident that some act of aggression was in contemplation, but these forces were equally available for attack upon Finland, Sweden, Norway, Holland, or this country, and it was impossible to tell beforehand where the blow would fall. If we had known that Denmark and Norway were to be the victims, we could not have prevented what happened, without the co-operation of those countries. But, in the belief that their neutrality would save them, they took no precautions, and they gave us no warning of an attack, which, indeed, they never suspected.

It will be remembered that in the early days of April, His Majesty's Government decided that they could no longer tolerate the continued use of Norwegian territorial waters as a long communication trench by which Germany could obtain constant supplies of iron ore and other contraband, and they had decided that on 8th April minefields would be laid at three points within Norwegian territorial waters, which would force this traffic out on to the high seas where it could be intercepted. It is a curious chance that this date of 8th April, decided upon by His Majesty's Government for this minor operation, should have coincided almost exactly with that chosen by the German Government for their long prepared invasion of Norway.

The Norwegian campaign opened on Sunday, 7th April, when we got information that a large German naval force was moving towards and along the West Coast of Norway. That evening the main Battle Fleet and the Second Cruiser Squadron sailed from Scapa and Rosyth in the hope of engaging the enemy. On Monday, 8th April, the First Cruiser Squadron sailed to join in the operations. On the morning of 9th April German land forces entered Denmark, and, aided by internal treachery prepared long beforehand, naval forces seized and landed troops at Oslo, Stavanger, Bergen and Trondheim.

On the same day His Majesty's Ship *Renown*, which was accompanying the destroyers watching over the minefield near Narvik, engaged the German battle cruiser *Scharnhorst* off the Northern coast of Norway opposite Narvik in extremely bad weather conditions and low visibility, inflicting considerable damage, although full reports of this were not available until the 11th. In the meantime, our destroyers had discovered a number of enemy vessels which had entered the Narvik Fjord under cover of a snowstorm and on the next day they fought the action in which their gallant Commander, Captain Warburton Lee lost his life, and other losses were sustained, but in which heavy damage was inflicted on the German destroyers and the merchant vessels in the Fjord.

In view of the obscurity of the situation in Central Norway and the importance of securing Narvik, our first military forces, which we had promptly assembled, sailed direct to the Narvik area,

arriving there on 15th April. In the meantime the very naval attack on 13th April completely destroyed the enemy naval forces at that port and made it unnecessary to utilise the capture of Narvik all the forces originally earmarked for operation.

In deciding upon our further action, the objectives which we had in view were—first, to give all the support and assistance in our power to the Norwegians; second, to resist or delay the German advance from the South; and third, to facilitate rescue and protection of the Norwegian King and Government.

It was obvious that these objectives could be most speedily attained if it were possible to capture Trondheim and in spite of the hazardous nature of the operation, with the Germans in possession of the place and in occupation of the only really efficient aerodrome in South West Norway at Stavanger we resolved to make the effort.

Since any landing would probably be opposed, it was essential that the first contingents should go as light as possible, to secure bases to which the heavier equipment could subsequently be transported and two landing places were selected respectively North and South of Trondheim.

At Namsos in the North Naval forces landed on 14th April and were followed by British troops on the 16th and 18th. A few days later the French Chasseurs Alpins landed and the arrival of these staunch and experienced troops was a welcome support to our men. Part of this force advanced rapidly to the neighbourhood of Steinkjer to support the Norwegians who were known to be holding that place. South of Trondheim the Naval forces landed at Andalsnes on 17th April followed by troops on 18th and 19th April. These advanced to the important railway junction of Dombås and a contingent went on to the South and joined the Norwegians who were opposing at Lillehammer the main German advance from the South.

I cannot to day give any details of the fighting which has taken place on both fronts since the landing took place. All that can be said at present is that our troops fought with gallantry and determination and inflicted heavy losses upon the enemy. Nevertheless the Allied forces in these regions were faced as we had realised that they would be faced with serious difficulties. Foremost among these was the fact that the available aerodromes were already in enemy hands. The most effective defence against air attack—the use of fighter aircraft—was thus largely denied to us and any hon. Members who have suffered the experience of being bombed from the air by low flying aeroplanes will know how greatly the supply and movement of troops are hampered.

In the circumstances it became evident to us some days ago it would be impossible owing to the German local air superiority to land the artillery and tanks which would be necessary in order to enable our troops to withstand the enemy drive from the South.

be remembered that in spite of the magnificent work by

British submarines and a French flotilla in the Skagerrak and the unceasing efforts of the Royal Air Force, particularly in bombing the aerodromes at Aalborg in Denmark the starting point, and Oslo, the landing place of German troop carriers it has always been possible for the Germans with their usual disregard of life, even of their own people, to send reinforcements to Norway at a much greater rate than would be open to us with the inadequate landing places that we have to rely on.

Accordingly, we decided last week that we must abandon any idea of taking Trondheim from the South and that we must, therefore, withdraw our troops from that area and transfer them elsewhere. The operation of withdrawal in face of the enemy is one which has always been recognised as among the most delicate and difficult of military operations, and the action of Sir John Moore at Corunna, though accompanied by heavy loss of life, including the Commander, has taken its place among the classic examples of British military skill. In the present instance we have been more fortunate. Thanks to the powerful forces which the Navy was able to bring to bear and the determination and skilful dispositions of General Paget, in command of the British land forces in the area, backed by the splendid courage and tenacity of the troops, we have now withdrawn the whole of our forces from Andalsnes under the very noses of the German aeroplanes, without, as far as I am aware, losing a single man in his operation. I should like to express my profound admiration for the manner in which all ranks have performed their tasks in the area South of Trondheim. I cannot yet give the House particulars of the casualties which our forces have sustained in the various operations, but I hope, and I have some reason to believe, that they have not been heavy in proportion to the scale of operations. I expect that we shall be able to get more detailed reports before long and I trust that this most distressing but inevitable period of uncertainty may not be prolonged. Although in the face of the overwhelming difficulties of the situation, it has not been possible to effect the capture of the town, I am satisfied that the balance of advantage lies up to the present with the Allied Forces.

It may be useful if I examine this point in somewhat greater detail. I have no doubt that the Germans expected a walk-over in Norway, as in Denmark. That expectation has been frustrated by the courage of the Norwegian people and by the efforts of the Allies. After three weeks of war, in which heavy losses have been sustained by the enemy on the sea, on land and in the air, Norway is not conquered, while the considerable supplies of ore which Germany was formerly obtaining from Narvik have been indefinitely suspended. During the period of just over three weeks the German Naval losses amount to a serious figure. They include two capital ships damaged certainly three, possibly four, cruisers sunk eleven destroyers sunk, and five U boats sunk. Thirty transports and store ships have been sunk,

scuttled, or set on fire with a loss of several thousands of lives. A further ten transport or store ships have been struck by our torpedoes and probably sunk.

The losses sustained by the Royal Navy in the same period. Four destroyers three submarines one sloop and five trawlers sunk. Five other warships have been damaged by air attack and one storeship has also been sunk by U boat torpedo. It will be seen from these figures that whereas the strength and efficiency of the Royal Navy have been little if at all affected the injury to the German Navy has been so substantial as to alter the entire balance of naval power and to permit an important redistribution of the main Allied fleets. In this connection I might mention that it has been thought possible to revert to the more normal distribution of ships in the Mediterranean which has for some time been affected by our requirements in the North Sea. A British and French battle fleet with cruisers and ancillary craft, is already in the Eastern basin of the Mediterranean on its way to Alexandria.

Returning to the Norway campaign the German losses in men, whether from the sinking of war vessels from the destruction of transports or in the course of the fighting in Norway itself on land and in the air cannot be estimated with any accuracy but they must have amounted to many thousands. At this moment, I would say to any who may be drawing hasty conclusions from the fact that for the present we have not succeeded in taking Trondheim. It is far too soon to strike the Norwegian balance sheet yet for the campaign has merely concluded a single in which it is safe to say that if we have not achieved our neither have the Germans achieved theirs while their losses far greater than ours.

But I would take this opportunity of addressing a warning both to this House and to the country. We have no intention of allowing Norway to become merely a side show but neither are we going to be trapped into such a dispersal of our forces as would leave us dangerously weak at the vital centre. We know that our enemy hold a central position. They have immense forces always mounted ready for attack and the attack can be launched with lightning rapidity in any one of many fields. We know that they are prepared and would not scruple to invade Holland Belgium or both. Or it may be that their savage hordes will hurled against their innocent neighbours in the South East of Europe. They might well do more than one of these things in preparation for an attempt at a large scale attack on the Western Front or even a lightning swoop on this country. It would be foolish indeed to reveal to the enemy our conception of the strategy best calculated to secure their defeat. But this can be said—for it is obvious—that we must not so disperse or tie up our forces as weaken our freedom of action in vital emergencies which may at any moment arise. We must seize every chance as we have done and shall continue to do in Norway to inflict damage upon the

enemy, but we must not allow ourselves to forget the long term strategy which will win the war

Mr Speaker, let me repeat that what I have said is only an interim statement. Certain operations are in progress, and we must do nothing which might jeopardise the lives of those engaged in them. I would, therefore, ask the House to defer comment and question until we can have the Debate next week, when I anticipate that that particular difficulty will not arise

7th May, 1940

THE PRIME MINISTER (MR CHAMBERLAIN) When I spoke on Thursday last, I stated that I could give only an incomplete account of the operations, and that a further statement would be made this week, when I hoped to be able to give a fuller story. I also intimated that I was obliged to impose a certain reticence upon myself, in order to avoid saying anything which might involve risk to our troops. Since then no doubt, hon Members have realised that, while at that time it was known that our Forces had been withdrawn from Andalsnes, we still had to withdraw troops from Namsos, and I was extremely anxious not to give any hint of an operation that was bound to be even more dangerous than the withdrawal from Andalsnes, both on account of the larger number of men to be taken off and of the fact that it would be possible for the Germans to bring there the whole available force of their bombers. Now, I am able once again to pay my tribute to the very remarkable skill of our naval and military Forces, who managed to effect this withdrawal, in the course of one single short night, without suffering any loss in the operation. The danger which they were running is illustrated by the fact that early on the following morning the Germans discovered that the troops were returning in their ships and they sent a force of some 50 bombers to attack them. Considering that this convoy was outside the range of our fighters and that it had to depend, therefore, solely upon the anti aircraft fire of the ships, I think we may count ourselves fortunate that we did not lose more than one British and one French destroyer—His Majesty's Ship *Afridi* and the French ship *Bison*. By this time the men from Namsos and those from Andalsnes are back again, and the campaign in Southern Norway is at an end.

Whatever criticisms may be made about anyone else, I am sure everybody will agree that the troops who have been engaged in this campaign carried out their task with magnificent gallantry and in a way which has added still further to the great traditions of the Service. Whether in hard fighting, or in stolid endurance, or in quick and skilful movements, exposed as they were to superior forces with superior equipment, they distinguished themselves in every respect, and man for man they showed themselves superior to their foes. I should add that we have also watched with pride and with admiration the splendid gallantry and dash of the men of the Royal Navy and the Royal Air Force, both of whom have

had continuous difficult and dangerous tasks to perform, and both of whom have performed great achievements

I do not propose this afternoon to give an account of the military operations in Southern Norway but what I rather want to do is to present to the House a picture of the situation and also to consider certain criticisms of the actions of the Government that have been made. No doubt the news of our withdrawal from Southern Norway created a profound shock both in this House and in the country

AN HON. MEMBER All over the world

THE PRIME MINISTER Well it was not expected that it would be necessary but I see that it is stated that Ministers were to blame for that. Ministers of course, must be expected to be blamed for everything. [HON. MEMBERS They missed the bus.] There were reports emanating from Stockholm—maybe invented by the enemy—which roused expectations which were never justified and which were certainly never endorsed by any Ministers. [Interruption]

MR. SPEAKER Hon. Members are anxious to hear the Prime Minister's statement. They cannot hear him if a few Members continue to interrupt, and I will not allow it.

THE PRIME MINISTER We did our best to damp down these unfounded reports. Of course, we had to be careful not to say anything which would inform the enemy of the true situation, and I am afraid that in the circumstances the shock and the disappointment were inevitable. I will try and examine the history and the causes of this failure and I will try to answer some questions. I do not wish to extenuate anything but at the same time I hope that we shall not exaggerate the extent or the importance of the check which we have received. The withdrawal from Southern Norway is not comparable with the withdrawal from Gallipoli. There were no large forces involved. The fact was, it was not much more than a single division, and our losses therefore, were not really great in number, nor was there any considerable or valuable amount of stores left behind. It must be remembered, as I have already pointed out, that if we had losses, the Germans had far heavier losses in warships, in planes, in transport and in men.

Still, I am quite aware that the result of these recent events is not to be measured merely in losses on the spot. We have to take account of the fact that we have suffered a certain loss of prestige, that a certain colour has been given to the false legend of German invincibility on land that some discouragement has been caused to our friends and that our enemies are crowing. We must accept that position for the moment though we need not help our enemies by making it worse. As to the reaction upon foreign opinion I think it might well have been more serious. Throughout the whole of this difficult period France has shown remarkable steadiness, and as in this country, the only effect of the reverse has been

to stiffen her determination Turkey, our Ally, remains unperturbed Egypt continues to strengthen her defences In the Near and Middle East the position has been quietened by a reversion to normal of our Fleet disposition in the Mediterranean As you would expect, the reaction has been more serious in Sweden than anywhere else, and I fully appreciate the reasons why I regret certain comments of a polemical character which have appeared in the Swedish Press, because although the expression of Swedish disappointment may be very natural, it does not help Sweden, nor the Allied cause What we are concerned with is not recriminations, which could equally well be made by either side, but rather the measures to be taken in the future, and in Sweden, if the Swedish Government and people decide for a policy of neutrality in the face of pressure, I trust that at least that neutrality will be strictly impartial as between the belligerents

Now I come to the sequence of events and the successive decisions of the Government I have said already that the first force which was assembled after the German invasion of Norway was despatched to Narvik I have not heard any criticism of our decision to send a force to Narvik, the gateway into the North Sea from the precious ore fields of Sweden, and I assume that our decision in that respect at any rate was generally approved But it perhaps may be asked, Why did we attempt an expedition to Trondheim when we must have known from the beginning that we should be faced with a local air superiority and that there was a strong probability that reinforcements would be sent up from the valleys which lead up from the direction of Oslo? I am not going to pretend that in those first anxious days we foresaw everything that was going to happen I doubt if there is anyone, even in this House, clever enough to have done that, but we did realise that the expedition, if we undertook it, would be full of risks We did realise that it would be difficult to take Trondheim and difficult to hold it unless we were able to check those reinforcements, and I may add that the aerodrome facilities at Trondheim were known to us to be inadequate to allow our aeroplanes to operate from it without extensive repair and extension

On the other hand, we had to consider the effect on the Norwegian Government, the Norwegian forces, and the Norwegian people if we made no attempt to hold Central Norway We received the most urgent and repeated appeals from the Norwegian Commander-in-Chief to attack Trondheim at all costs, as a place essential to the Government for a port and as a seat for the Government and the King It really was made clear to us that unless we were ready to assist in the only way which the Norwegians themselves felt to be effective, namely, by an attack on Trondheim, the Norwegians were not likely to feel able to continue their resistance, and the whole country would have fallen at once into German hands In those circumstances we felt unanimously that, hazardous as this expedition might be, in the absence of aerodromes from which we could operate, and in view of the inadequate landing

places which were all that were open to us we must run that risk, we must do our best to give help to a brave people who, with extraordinary courage in spite of their tiny numbers in spite of the fact that they had almost forgotten what war meant whose thoughts had been only of peace yet had had the stamina to stand up to the German bully and to make an effort to save the freedom and independence of their country Is there anybody here who would have done otherwise? I do not believe it and I feel myself that if we had refused to answer the call that was being made to us from Norway we should have justified the reproach that our only object in Scandinavia was the iron ore in Sweden and that we cared nothing for the freedom of small nations

Now I come to the next point Ought we to have made a direct attack upon Trondheim instead of confining ourselves to the attacks made from the landing places at Namsos and Andalsnes? This is a point upon which experts may and will differ and there will be opinion which deserves respect and will command respect no doubt on both sides of the case Since in fact the operation was not tried it will never be possible to decide the question finally and once for all and all I can say now is that that idea was constantly before us that plans for a direct assault on Trondheim combined with the operations of the forces at Namsos and Andalsnes were prepared and were carefully considered Operations of this kind are necessarily complicated in character and must need a considerable time for thorough preparation if success is to be assumed Moreover for a time it did seem as if the capture of Trondheim might be effected by the forces alone that had been landed elsewhere We always supposed that German reinforcements would be delayed by the blowing up of railway bridges by the obstruction of the roads which led up those two valleys from Oslo In that we were disappointed No demolitions in time to delay the Germans except a couple of bridges blown up by a British party were made The rapid advance of the Germans accompanied by tanks artillery and mortars first held up our troops and then forced them to retire

Now I come to a criticism which has had a considerable circulation and has appeared in many organs of the Press It has been suggested that the Anglo-Finnish force if I may so call it—the force which was designed for the assistance of Finland—should never have been dispersed and that if it had been kept in being either we might have forestalled the German seizure of the Norwegian ports or if we could not do that at least we might have been able to send larger forces more quickly to the scene of operations Let me point out to the House first of all that whatever forces we had had at our disposal we could not have forestalled the Germans unless the Norwegians had either invited us or at least allowed us to come in for I do not suppose that anyone would suggest that we should have invaded Norway before Germany did so Unfortunately, in their determination to preserve the strictest neutrality, the last thing the Norwegians would do was to

allow us to enter those ports unopposed, and consequently we were helpless to prevent the German stroke which was made easy by treachery from inside Norway and which had been prepared long beforehand by the concealment of troops and materials in apparently innocent looking ships.

If the argument is that by dispersing the Anglo-Finnish force we missed an opportunity of successfully attacking after the Germans had delivered their blow why then I say that that argument is founded on a complete misconception. Let me explain. These are the facts. The forces prepared for the Anglo-Finnish expedition consisted of two parts. One part was advance troops who were to be sent first to Finland the other part was a larger body who would have followed after the first had reached Scandinavia. This second contingent was the main body of the force. When the Finnish campaign was given up it was decided that there was no need to keep this larger force in this country, and accordingly it was despatched to France where it had originally been intended to go but the advance troops were detained here. The House must understand this that the rate of despatch of troops to Norway was not governed by the availability of troops in this country, it was governed by the speed with which they could be landed at those very few and inadequate ports of entry which alone were open to us to use. Therefore Members will see that under this arrangement there would have been no delay in following up the first troops with the main body from France if we could have established the first troops in Norway. The fact that the main body was in France would not have involved any delay whatsoever provided that that establishment could have taken place. Therefore I say that no time was lost by the dispersal of that part—the only part—of the Anglo-Finnish forces which in any case would not have gone with the first contingent and which if the first contingent could have established itself would have been able to follow it in just as quick time although it came from France.

There is just another consideration. It is as well not to forget that for the transport of the Anglo-Finnish forces a substantial amount of shipping was required and for a considerable time that shipping was kept standing idle until it should be required. The Germans of course who cannot use their ships on the high seas can afford to keep them standing by until they think that the favourable moment has arrived for another assault on an innocent neutral. We are in a different position. We can usefully use every ton of shipping space for carrying foodstuffs, raw materials, munitions or equipment to this country, and it would be quite unjustifiable to keep a whole fleet waiting indefinitely on the chance that they might be wanted for an expedition to Scandinavia. Nevertheless I stress again to the House that we did keep ready certain forces to occupy certain Norwegian ports if their neutrality had been previously violated by Germany. We had reason to believe that a relatively small force would have been

sufficient to occupy and hold these places until further forces could be landed but after the forestalment they were insufficient to restore the position although they were available for and embodied in, the forces which were landed at Namsos and Andalsnes.

Lastly there is the question Was it right when we had decided that our operations could not capture Trondheim to withdraw our forces or should we have reinforced those forces which we had already in Norway with a view to making a further attempt? I believe it was right to make the first attempt and equally right to withdraw our troops when it was clear that the plan would not succeed. The failure of the plan was due to two factors. First of all our inability to secure aerodromes from which to operate our fast fighters, secondly, the rapid arrival of German reinforcements. We always believed that if our troops could get ashore they would not suffer heavy casualties from the air and in fact, that proved to be the case. But the absence of fighters enabled the enemy to attack our communications and hindered our reinforcements while his own land communications enabled him to bring up an ever increasing superiority of strength. It became clear to us that we could only maintain our forces in the Trondheim region by such a concentration of men and materials and aircraft as would have drawn off altogether an undue proportion of our total resources and in these circumstances we decided that we could carry on the campaign in Norway, elsewhere with greater vigour and effect. So thanks to the skill and courage of all three Services we successfully withdrew all our forces from the Trondheim area.

I have dealt with the criticisms that I have seen and I will leave my right hon. Friends to fill in the details and answer any questions which may arise on technical matters, including the composition and equipment of our forces. There are however some general observations which I desire to offer to the House and which I want to impress upon hon. Members of all parties because I do not think any sound judgment can be arrived at on the question we are discussing if these considerations are overlooked. First of all I want to ask hon. Members not to form any hasty opinions on the result of the Norwegian campaign so far as it has gone. It is quite obvious that the Germans have made certain gains and equally clear that they have paid a heavy price for them. It is too early to say on which side the balance will finally incline but I may remind the House that the campaign is not yet finished. A large part of Norway is not in German hands. The King and the Government are still on Norwegian soil and they will rally round them the remainder of the Norwegian forces to carry on the fight against the invader in which we shall be at their side. The Norwegian Foreign Minister, in a broadcast has told his people to be patient. That is wise advice. Although we shall give all help to Norway that we can and as soon as we can we must not forget that there are other fronts which may at any moment blaze up into a conflagration.

That brings me to the second point that I want to make Germany, with her vast and well equipped armies is so placed that she can at any moment attack any one or a number of different points. We want to be ready to meet that attack wherever it may come and the more vital the point the more important it is that we should be ready to meet it. A Minister who shows any sign of confidence is always called complacent. If he fails to do so he is labelled defeatist. For my part I try to steer a middle course—[*Interruption*—neither raising undue expectations—[HON. MEMBERS "Hitler missed the bus"] which are unlikely to be fulfilled, nor making the people's flesh creep by painting pictures of unmitigated gloom. A great many times some hon. Members have repeated the phrase 'Hitler missed the bus'—[HON. MEMBERS "You said it"] Yes I said it, and I will now explain the circumstances in which I said it, because this is an extraordinarily good example of the way in which prejudiced people can twist words out of their meaning and apply them to totally different circumstances in order to create prejudice. The worst of that is that a lot of well meaning honest people who do not pay any meticulous attention to what is going on soon forget the actual circumstances and are ready to accept stories which are spread about.

I believe that quite a lot of people think that when I said Hitler missed the bus I was referring to his invasion of Norway, but, the speech in which that remark occurred was made on 5th April which was three days before that. I would like to remind hon. Members of what was the argument which led up to the phrase. I had been saying that the advantage of totalitarian States lay in the fact that they prepared for war while we were thinking only of peace. I said that the result of that was that at the beginning of the war they were far superior to us in arms and equipment, and I observed that it was an extraordinary thing to me that, seeing the great disparity which existed Hitler had not taken advantage of it to attack the Allies at the very beginning of the war, when the disparity was greatest. But I said that whatever the reason, Hitler missed the bus. It may seem that that phrase was a trifle colloquial for a Prime Minister. Nevertheless it was an accurate description of what I was talking about but it evidently had no relation to the future, it was merely a commentary on the past. But that is a digression brought about by the interruption opposite. I am bound to say this afternoon that while I think the implications of the Norwegian campaign have been seriously exaggerated and while I retain my complete confidence in our ultimate victory I do not think that the people of this country yet realise the extent or the imminence of the threat which is impending against us. [AN HON. MEMBER "We said that five years ago"] We may, and if we are wise we shall learn many useful lessons from this campaign. I will not say how our strategic plans for the future may be affected by those lessons. The experience of Norway shows how swiftly the scene alters in the

rapid exchanges of war. Let us beware of being tempted into such a dispersal of our forces as might suit the purposes of the enemy. Let us beware also of bickerings and divisions among ourselves when presently we may be faced by war in its most violent form directed against this country in the hope of breaking its courage and its will power. This is not a time for quarrelling among ourselves. It is rather a time for closing our ranks, for setting our teeth and all of us endeavouring to put every ounce of our strength and energy into arming our Forces and forging every weapon which will help us to win.

We cannot help it but in this Debate we are giving hostages to fortune. Our military advisers have told us in very solemn terms of the dangers of holding such a discussion. They have urged us to try to have no debate at all. We could not accept that view. In a democratic country there must be criticism and if there is criticism those who are criticised must be allowed to defend themselves, whatever the dangers may be. In this Debate four members of the War Cabinet, all of them directly associated with the conduct of the war, are to speak, and they will not only be fortunate but they will be skilful if they give nothing away that may help the enemy. All of them will be replying to criticisms. All of them are aware that attempts have been made to separate them from one another, to suggest that this Minister or that Minister is more responsible than his colleagues for this or that action. Such suggestions are as unworthy as they are unfounded. There is no division among us. None of us has attempted to intrigue against any other. All of us have but one thought, and that is how may each of us make our best contribution to the winning of the war.

I am unaware of the suggestions, I may almost call them demands, which have been made in this House and out of it for a different kind of Cabinet. I am not speaking now of personal questions but of what may be called the constitutional form. I do not want to argue that question again, but I may be allowed to say that some of those who have had a long experience of Cabinet work, my right hon. colleague Lord Hankey, the First Lord of the Admiralty, and I myself, are agreed that it would not really save time or lead to quicker decisions if we had a Cabinet which was composed solely or mainly of Members free from departmental work. In taking decisions it is impossible to ignore those who have to carry the decisions out. Ministers who have been responsible for the executive work must be there when decisions are taken, they must express their views. Therefore, whether they are inside or outside the Cabinet does not really make any difference, they will in any case take their share in those decisions.

The fact that I have always felt unable to accept this particular suggestion does not mean that I am unwilling from time to time to make changes in personnel or in the functions of members of the Cabinet. I did not hesitate, for example, to go outside the political field in order to find new Ministers when I thought that

would serve the public interest. Not long ago I instituted a change, not of personnel, but of functions, which I would like to mention to the House, because some accounts have appeared in the Press which are not quite accurate. Hon Members may remember that on the 11th of last month I announced here that on the retirement of Lord Chatfield I had asked my right hon Friend the First Lord of the Admiralty to succeed him as Chairman of the Military Co-ordinating Committee of the Cabinet. My right hon Friend very readily accepted the position which I asked him to take, but after he had had some experience of it he suggested to me that in order to make his assistance to the Cabinet more effective it would be a good thing that he should be put into closer contact with the Chiefs of Staff. I thought my right hon Friend's idea was a good one. Accordingly, after discussing the question fully with the other Service Ministers, arrangements were made under which my right hon Friend is authorised by the Cabinet on behalf of the Military Co-ordinating Committee to give guidance and direction to the Chief of Staff Committee, who will prepare plans to carry out the objectives which are given to them by him. I need hardly say that the Chiefs of Staff will retain their collective responsibility to the Cabinet as they do their individual responsibility to their Ministers, but my right hon Friend will, under this arrangement, have a special responsibility for the supervision of military operations day by day, and I have no doubt that we shall in this way ensure that every aspect of military policy is examined, and that when policy is decided upon it is followed up with promptness and energy.

AN HON MEMBER When was this arrangement made?

THE PRIME MINISTER Does the hon Member want the date and the hour? If so, he had better put a question down. It is not very long ago—since 11th April.

MR LLOYD GEORGE (Cardiff Boroughs) Will the First Lord of the Admiralty retain his present position?

THE PRIME MINISTER Yes, Sir. My right hon Friend feels that that would be the best arrangement, and I am inclined to think that the important work at the Admiralty should remain in his hands if it is possible, but I am relying upon him to let me know if he finds that the new tasks which have been imposed upon him make it difficult for him to fulfil them and the work at the Admiralty as well. Then, of course, in such a case I shall take steps to relieve him.

MR HERBERT MORRISON (Hackney South) It is material that the House should know whether this new arrangement, whereby the First Lord of the Admiralty had certain new powers of direction over the Committee of the Chiefs of Staff, covered the period of the Norwegian operations, or is it since the Norwegian operations commenced?

THE PRIME MINISTER I appreciate the point. No, it was not before the Norwegian operations, it has only been made

recently and did not arise out of the Norwegian operations because the change would have been made in any case. For the purposes I have mentioned my right hon. Friend has been provided with a small personal staff under a distinguished staff officer Major General Ismay, and General Ismay has been appointed an additional member of the Chiefs of Staff Committee. I have no doubt other changes in the form of Government or the functions of individual members of it may from time to time suggest themselves as desirable. I think it is very likely that changes of that kind in war time are almost bound to take place. As far as I am concerned I shall endeavour to keep my mind open to any fresh considerations and to take any steps which may seem to be called for if they will help the country. Once again I want to urge hon. Members that in these strenuous days we should do better to occupy ourselves with increasing war effort rather than disputing about the form of Government. It is in the production of materials the production of planes the production of tanks and guns and munitions and all the countless articles of equipment which are required to fit out our weapons and make them useful, it is in the production of these things that we want organisation energy and good will. As far as we in the Government are concerned we are doing all we can to overtake the start which Germany has obtained during her long years of preparation. We are getting to-day the whole hearted co-operation of employers and workers; we want also to get the co-operation of hon. Members of all parties.

MR. MANDER (Wolverhampton East) No no.

THE PRIME MINISTER The co-operation of Members of all parties if not the co-operation of all Members of all parties in a work which everyone recognises to be the prime need to-day. We do not set ourselves up as being infallible as above receiving help from others who are willing to help. Let us then before these trials come upon us put all our strength into the work of preparing for them and we shall thus steadily increase our strength until we ourselves are able to deliver our blows where and when we will.

MR. ATTLEE (Stepney Limehouse) I should like in the first place on behalf of my hon. Friends on this side of the House to pay a tribute to the courage and skill of the Fighting Forces in the Norwegian campaign. The men of the Army Navy and Air Force men from this country and men from France and men of the Norwegian race as well have done acts of great valour in very difficult conditions. I should like too to express our sympathy with the people of Norway whose land has been the scene of war and carnage. I should like further to express our admiration of the skill with which that very difficult operation of evacuating troops in the face of the enemy was carried out at Andalsnes and Namsos. We had experiences of this in the last war. We know how anxious and difficult an undertaking it is and we know that

in this case it was rendered far more difficult than it was in the last war by the air arm. In those circumstances it was a wonderful feat of arms. But, after all, it is a retirement. It does represent a setback, and that is what we have to consider in this House. I thought the tone of the Prime Minister's statement last Thursday was over optimistic and although he does not like the word over-optimistic, and I am certain the speech of the First Lord of the Admiralty was far too optimistic. Last Thursday, the Prime Minister said that we must not come to hasty conclusions. There were some very hasty conclusions come to in those speeches. The First Lord of the Admiralty said

'We are greatly advantaged by what has occurred provided we act with unceasing and increasing vigour

The Prime Minister said

'I am satisfied that the balance of advantage lies up to the present with the Allied Forces

The Prime Minister asked us not to controvert that but to suspend judgment, but he made a statement there in which he came to a certain judgment. I think it is very difficult at this time in the light of events, to say that this campaign so far has been to our advantage. In his speech to day, I think the Prime Minister struck a rather different note, there was a good deal more of a note of excuse and explanation. No one of us wishes to give any handle to the enemy, but we have a service and a duty to the nation to perform in examining into the events that have occurred. We have to face facts. We are not afraid of facing facts. This is a reverse, and let it be remembered, high hopes were raised, raised partly in the speeches of Ministers but very much so in the Press and over the wireless. There were statements made, and those statements were not contradicted—it might not have been possible to contradict them, but I cannot believe that the Government have no influence at all with the Press and the wireless by means of advice—and I think it was extraordinarily ill advised that the people of this country should have had their spirits raised by accounts which encouraged ordinary people to imagine that everything was going wonderfully well and that we were having a wonderful success. There should have been more guidance. We are paying the penalty now, because after great expectations there is necessarily disappointment. It is no good trying to minimise the event. We realise that it has to be looked at in the light of the general conditions of the war, we must bear in mind the requirements of the larger strategy. But this was never intended to be a mere tip and run expedition. The country considered it to be of major importance. The Press so represented it. The speeches of Ministers so represented it. The general view was that here at last, when the enemy had been backed behind his walls he had now put out his head to be hit.

SIR WILLIAM DAVISON (Kensington, South) It was very badly hit

MR ATTLEE It was represented not that this would be a matter of hit and then go away again but that here was a chance of the campaign opening up. It is no good hon. Members quarrelling with my statement that view was taken. Therefore there is widespread disappointment at this setback. It is said that in this war hitherto there has never been any initiative from our side and it is said also that there is no real planning in anticipation of the possible strokes that will be taken against us. I think we must examine this affair from that aspect. If we look back, we find that the Government had the idea of blocking with mines the route to Narvik. I do not intend to discuss whether that was or was not a good idea but if that was to be done it must have been apparent to those who intended to do it that there was the very greatest possibility of a hit back by Germany. The first question I want to put is what provision was made for that contingency? The Prime Minister said that Germany had planned this expedition with very great care over a long period. I want to know what care was exercised in planning the means for defeating that stroke if it should come.

We were informed on 19th March that we had a force of 100 000 men ready to go to Finland. It would have been a pretty considerable operation to place a large number of troops in Finland and to arrange for the necessary troops in case there came a counter attack on their lines of communication through Norway and Sweden. We were assured that those troops were fully prepared. Either they were or they were not. If they were fully prepared in every way I want to know what happened to them. If they were not prepared in every way we may have escaped a serious disaster in Finland. But what I cannot understand is the rapid dispersal of all these troops at the time when that was done. The Finnish war ended in March. The Government came to a decision some time after that, to lay mines in Norwegian waters on 8th April. I should have thought that in the event of there being that mining the Government would have kept in being this force in case of a counter stroke. I do not suggest all of them could have been kept together in transports but I gather that some troops were kept together. I want to know whether those troops were considered adequate and whether the necessary equipment was there the necessary aircraft and the necessary ships to take them and whether they were the right kind of troops.

I have been informed that we had a body of troops trained men who could ski and that they were ready for the Finnish campaign. I have been told that they were dispersed and put to all sorts of other jobs. Why? When there was the possibility of a campaign in Norway why were these troops dispersed? I would say generally that for any enterprise in a country like Norway very seasoned and experienced troops are required. One has naturally to deal with what one has got. I do not suggest that the troops we sent to Norway did not fight

magnificently, but people are asking whether they were the troops that ought to have been sent. I have heard stories of some boys being sent there, quite young and having very little training. That is a very serious thing. In a widely distributed country like Norway, with the rigours of life there, one ought to send, not boys, but experienced and older men. We had an experience in the Dardanelles of having young boys sent out. They did not last long. It was seasoned men capable of responsibility and enterprise, who were wanted for this Norwegian affair. I want to know whether the right kind of troops were sent.

The Germans anticipated any action we might take by invading Norway, and the question I want to put to the Government regarding that is, what information had the Government through our intelligence service? We are told that the Government knew there were assemblings of troops practising embarkation and disembarkation, but that there were four or five different places to which they might go, and we could not tell which. I have no doubt that obtaining intelligence in Germany is very difficult, but surely we had an intelligence service in Norway? It is unbelievable that in Norway and Denmark the landing preparations that had gone on for many months could have passed without any indication. I want to know whether we got intelligence and whether such intelligence, if we did get it, was properly used.

I have an impression that in all this affair the Government's mind was too much fixed on Narvik and not enough on general considerations. We know that detailed plans for the seizure of Norway had been made by the German General Staff, and had been known to us for some years. I wonder whether they were in the minds of our Staff. I want to know whether, having knowledge of those plans, we were working out exactly what should be done to counter them in case they should be put into operation. The Germans having successfully occupied those Norwegian ports, of course the conditions were entirely different from those of the Finnish expedition and the question that strikes one at once is the vital matter of the base at which we were to land troops. If we were to land, the first condition should have been that the place should be reasonably safe from the air and reasonably safe from the water, and surely in this the time factor was of importance. The Germans landed only a few troops in these selected places, but it was clear that if they were given time they would bring up reinforcements by air and could make landing extremely difficult. It should have been apparent, therefore, that speed was an essential of the operation and I contend it should have been clear that the vital thing was to seize an air base. Granting all the difficulties—the difficulty of the climate, the difficulty of the Allies working in different elements, granting the difficulty of assembling the necessary transports, granting the risks, the point is that in any event, this was a risky operation and the risks had to be taken. What I want to know is did the Government go

all out on a settled plan for the vital objective or did they act half-heartedly? Narvik was really secondary. Stavanger or Trondheim were the real points of importance. The serious thing is that it does not seem that the Government realised the importance of the air weapon until after the event. I was disturbed by what the Prime Minister said in that respect. Despite all the things that have been said in this House despite the lessons of Poland and Finland the Government do not seem to have appreciated the vital importance of protection from the air either by ground defences or by fighter aircraft. That after all seems to me to have been a *sine qua non* of the whole adventure. Unless you could secure that evacuation was certain.

I ask whether action was taken in time. The Germans landed their forces at Trondheim and it was ten days afterwards before our forces were landed at Namsos and Andalsnes. Ten days is a long time. I grant that if you had suddenly to improvise every thing, ten days seems a short time but the question is: How far had the Government gone in making their plans and keeping in being a force for this eventuality? I am making no criticisms with regard to the evacuation. I think that, having failed to get an air base in the conditions there evacuation was inevitable. But that does not alter the fact that the campaign in Southern Norway has definitely been a failure. It is no good suggesting that somehow or other it has not been a failure and that you can push on from Narvik and start again and come down. It is a considerable business to push on from a far away Northern base like Narvik and we have to recognise that fact. The next point about which I wish to ask is this. I have said that speed in seizing a base was essential. But there was also the stopping of reinforcements. We could not stop reinforcements from the air but I certainly got a more optimistic note about what the Fleet could do from the First Lord of the Admiralty. We were certainly under the impression that although some reinforcements might get through on the whole the Germans would be unable to reinforce their armies from Oslo. But they were able to do so.

THE FIRST LORD OF THE ADMIRALTY (MR. CHURCHILL) I said that they would take a heavy toll.

MR. ATTLEE I quite agree that the right hon. Gentleman said that they would not do it with impunity but I think he gave us encouragement. After all in considering the inception of this expedition that is one of the vital factors—how far we could prevent those reinforcements being made. One has to recognise also that an unknown quantity was the extent of the defence which the Norwegians could put up. But the gravamen of my attack on the Government is that it does not seem that there was a thinking out of our plans beforehand that there was not adequate Intelligence that there was not the necessary concentration on the essential objective and I ask whether, at any time, there was not delay and discussion where action was necessary.

I am not in the least satisfied despite all the Prime Minister has said that the present War Cabinet is an efficient instrument for conducting the war. We have criticised it in this House over and over again. It has been criticised by men of wide experience in the Press and on the platform and until I heard the Prime Minister mention Lord Hankey to-day—and I think the First Lord of the Admiralty—I have never heard anyone except the Prime Minister and perhaps the Chancellor of the Exchequer defend it. It is wrong in principle. It could only be justified by success and we have not had that success. We must turn to the wider repercussions but I would say a word here of the new proposal about the First Lord of the Admiralty. The First Lord of the Admiralty is to continue to preside at the Board of Admiralty and is also to be chairman of the Chiefs of Staff Committee. Frankly I do not think it fair to the First Lord of the Admiralty to put him in that position.

THE PRIME MINISTER I think the right hon. Gentleman misunderstood me. I did not say that he was to be chairman of the Chiefs of Staff. I said he was to give guidance and direction to them. That does not mean that he will necessarily attend at every meeting of the Chiefs of Staff. The right hon. Gentleman will notice that he has an officer who is attached to him and who is an official member of the Chiefs of Staff Committee.

MR ATTLEE The point is that the right hon. Gentleman is now to be given a rather exceptional position as being the member of the War Cabinet who is more particularly concerned with major strategy. It is against all good rules of organisation that a man who is in charge of major strategy should also be in command of a particular unit. It is like having a man commanding an army in the field and also commanding a division. He has a divided interest between the wider questions of strategy and the problems affecting his own immediate command. The First Lord of the Admiralty has great abilities but it is not fair to him that he should be put into an impossible position like that. Our friends have been disheartened. We have had a reverse but we have had reverses before and no one of us is in the slightest degree shaken in his faith that we are going to win this war. When we have reverses the essential thing is that we should learn from them and should not repeat our mistakes. I have no doubt whatever in the courage and constancy of all the people of this country, provided they get the right lead, but the Government will be blind and deaf if they do not realise that there is widespread anxiety among the people of this country—people of all views and of all kinds of thought. They are not satisfied that the war is being waged with sufficient energy, intensity, drive and resolution.

It is not Norway alone. Norway comes as the culmination of many other discontents. People are saying that those mainly responsible for the conduct of affairs are men who have had an almost uninterrupted career of failure. Norway follows Czechoslovakia and Poland. Everywhere the story is 'Too late.' The

Prime Minister talked about missing buses. What about all the buses which he and his associates have missed since 1931? They missed all the peace buses, but caught the war bus. The people find that these men who have been consistently wrong in their judgment of events, the same people who thought that Hitler would not attack Czecho Slovakia, who thought that Hitler could be appeased seem not to have realised that Hitler would attack Norway. They see everywhere a failure of grip, a failure of drive, not only in the field of defence and foreign policy, but in industry. The Government are not organising the resources of the country. The Prime Minister said that we must do certain things and appealed to us but we have had six or seven months in which those things ought to have been done. We are not getting the organisation of food and we are not organising man power in the absence of an effective lead and we had better face the fact that this is having its repercussions on the national morale.

The Times in a leading article says that the Prime Minister's weakness has always been his devotion to colleagues who are either failures or need a rest. In a life-and-death struggle we cannot afford to have our destinies in the hands of failures or men who need a rest. I am not sure that *The Times* is right in saying that that is the Prime Minister's weakness. I think it is a particular weakness of hon. Members on the benches opposite. They have seen failure after failure merely shifted along those benches, either lower down or further up. They have been content, week after week, with Ministers whom they knew were failures. They have allowed their loyalty to the Chief Whip to overcome their loyalty to the real needs of the country. I say that the House of Commons must take its full responsibility. I say that there is a widespread feeling in this country, not that we will lose the war, that we will win the war, but that to win the war we want different people at the helm from those who have led us into it.

SIR ARCHIBALD SINCLAIR (Caithness and Sutherland)
I wish, in the first place, to join in the tribute which has been paid by the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition to the Fighting Forces for the skill and courage which they have shown in the operations in Norway and the success with which they have carried out the very difficult and delicate operation of withdrawing, while in contact with the enemy, from that country. Before I come to the main theme on which I shall venture to address the House this afternoon, I would refer briefly to a subject connected only indirectly with it, which the Prime Minister mentioned towards the close of his speech. I am not surprised to hear that the Chiefs of Staff, with the very heavy responsibilities which rest upon their shoulders for the conduct of operations on which our victory in the war and the future of our country may depend, have felt, among their other anxieties, some anxiety about what might be said in the course of these Debates.

That they should have felt such anxieties is quite natural, and

it seems to be also very natural that, having felt such anxieties, they should have consulted with the Prime Minister. I am, however, sorry that the Prime Minister mentioned this fact, because I think it would have been better left private. I do not think it is one of which we ought to be asked to take any cognisance, because our Debates must be absolutely free, and there must be no suggestion that from outside, either from military advisers or from any other direction, we should receive hints or advice as to how they should be conducted. Conversely, I am not at all sure that it might not be a good thing for Ministers themselves to keep in their own hands contacts with the Press and that it would not be better if contact with the Press were made by Ministers when issuing statements and not by professional staff officers.

Let me say that I do not wish to criticise any more than the Leader of the Opposition criticised the Government's decision to evacuate Norway when they were advised by their Chiefs of Staff that it was impossible to carry to a successful conclusion the operations for the capture of Trondheim. It seems to me that in these circumstances the Government were abundantly right to act on the advice of their military advisers. Our criticism and examination must be directed to the question of why we ever got ourselves into a position in which we had to accept defeat in Norway. It is a defeat, the evacuation of the whole country of Norway with the exception of the mountainous and sparsely populated northern appendix of that country. Not indeed that our defeat in Norway is a major military disaster, it is nothing of the kind.

I remember so well, at the beginning of the last war, being on the retreat with my regiment from the Belgian frontier, and after a few days, when we were relieved from the rearguard, passing through the outskirts of Paris and seeing the great guns in those fortifications and hearing that the French Government had left Paris. Then came that great reversal, the miracle of the Marne, but even after that battle a great part of the industrial resources of France and a number of her great cities remained in the hands of the enemy, and remained there until the end of the war. Why, nothing like that has happened on this occasion, and nothing even remotely approaching it. There is nothing to shake our confidence in the courage and efficiency of our Fighting Forces, and nothing which deprives us of large resources, vital for the future conduct of the war. There is nothing which affects our power, or should weaken our resolve, to win this war. There is, however, something which does suggest that more foresight and energy, and stronger and more ruthless will to victory, are required in the supreme direction of our war effort. An authorised spokesman of the Government told the Press that he trembled to think what might have happened to us if we had been attacked as early in this war as we were in the last war. Let us be thankful for our French Allies and for the respect which the valour, efficiency and equipment of the French inspire in the breasts of the enemy.

expense we restored ships which had been prepared for the transport of troops materials and supplies to their original condition, and a week or two later we had to refit them again for transport work

The Prime Minister said that the Cabinet could not foresee everything and he doubted whether Members of this House had foreseen everything. I think that Members of the House really did foresee this. I am sure at any rate, that there were a great many other Members besides myself who foresaw that the German counterstroke, which Ministers had watched in preparation, was likely to be launched with lightning swiftness and ruthless energy the moment the Germans got wind of what we were doing. The newspapers asked us to admire the speed with which the small force with inadequate supplies had been collected and transported. They ought to have been ready and to have been practising like the Germans were for this operation. The Prime Minister said that the Anglo-French force could not have forestalled the Germans because the Norwegians were neutral and we were not going to infringe their neutrality. If the force had been ready, however, it could have been got there before the ten days which it took to get there, before the Germans could have settled in, before they could have settled into the Norwegian aerodromes, and before they could have got their supplies there. The Prime Minister said that the advance troops of the Finnish force were retained here and that it was only the remainder which was sent to France. I have been told by an officer who was in this defence force that it is true they were retained in this country but that they were dispersed. There was no effort to keep the force and its equipment together. Then the Prime Minister told us that the troops could have reached Norway as quickly from France as from this country. I should have thought they could have reached Norway even from an English port more quickly than they could from France. They could certainly have reached there more quickly from a Scottish port if they had been kept within reach of such a port. I could not understand why it was unjustifiable to keep the ships if it was justifiable to keep the troops. It is no good keeping ships without troops or troops without ships.

THE PRIME MINISTER. Ships were ready, but they were not troopships.

SIR A. SINCLAIR. They did not use troopships? They were all transported in warships?

THE PRIME MINISTER. I am only referring to the force we had kept in being. The right hon. Gentleman asks what was the use of keeping the force if we had not the ships. We had ships in which troops could be conveyed, but they were warships and not merchant ships.

SIR A. SINCLAIR. We never, in fact, used troopships that we were preparing and they were all conveyed in warships?

THE PRIME MINISTER I did not say that It is a mistake to assume that no troopships were used on any occasion

SIR A SINCLAIR The main point is that we ought to have had a far stronger force and we ought to have retained the necessary ships The neutrals were told that the danger was real that they ought to be prepared and that we would be ready if they were prepared and we ought to have put ourselves in a state of greater readiness than that in which we were when the hour of danger came The moment the Government took that decision the moment they said they were going to stop the iron ore going down the Norwegian territorial waters to Germany their sentence was for open war in Scandinavia and against that danger every precaution ought to have been taken both for our sakes and the sake of Norway

The key to the situation was not Narvik at all but Trondheim I did not know until the Prime Minister told us this afternoon what the Norwegians point of view was He told us that the Norwegians said that the only place where effective help might be given was Trondheim I did not know that that was their view but it was clear to me that it was by far the most vital strategic point To hold Narvik when we have captured it let alone to advance from it along a railway which is ill-adapted for military operations will not be easy There is a sort of idea about that it was very unpleasant to be in Trondheim under the hail of German bombs but that once you got right away to Narvik you were quite safe As a matter of fact whereas Namsos is 340 miles from Stavanger and 530 from Aalborg Narvik is only 400 miles from Trondheim Therefore, Narvik is likely soon to be exposed to the full blast of German air attack Moreover now that the Germans are secure in their occupation of Trondheim our best getaway into Sweden is closed to us and along with all the other road gateways from Norway into Sweden it is open to the Germans

Whether the occupation of Trondheim was a feasible operation of war I will leave to other more expert Members of the House to discuss and I am sure the whole House wants to hear the hon. and gallant Member for North Portsmouth (Sir R. Keyes) on that point If it was not the Norwegian expedition ought never to have been undertaken If it was a feasible operation it ought to have been undertaken with ruthless determination The Germans may have sacrificed a third of their fleet but that fleet has helped to win a campaign which is more than the Kaiser's greater fleet ever succeeded in doing It is vain for the Prime Minister to condemn the Germans for disregarding life by sending their reinforcements to Norway A wise general is careful not to throw away the lives of his troops without regard to the objects to be attained but 10,000 men must surely be an exaggerated estimate of the German losses in the Skagerrak That is no great price to pay, however for a victorious modern battle let alone a campaign As Macaulay said in his essay on Hallam's History

To carry the spirit of peace into war is a weak and cruel policy. languid war does not save blood and money but squanders them"

were hastily improvising instead of working to long and carefully matured plans

I hope that planning is going on now. One violent episode will succeed another during the course of the next few. The Prime Minister said that he was concerned about the situation of Sweden and hoped that Sweden would preserve her neutrality strictly. Let us be fair to Sweden. Sweden is now surrounded and German pressure on her will increase. Can we help her to resist and if so how? I am not asking for answers to these questions though I should like to know that they are being considered. Are we prepared to offer her military and air support? There is one thing which I am told the Swedes are very much concerned about. I have had this from a man who has just come back from Sweden and has been meeting influential people there. He tells me that in Sweden they have noted that when Denmark and Norway came into the war willy nilly through the brutal action of the Germans their towns and cities were bombed by our Air Force and yet we do not bomb the German towns. They want to know that if we help them we shall not merely bomb Swedish towns which may be occupied temporarily by German troops but not be deterred from bombing the German quays and harbours from which those German troops embark. An ultimatum to Sweden within the next week or two would not be surprising to any student of Nazi technique. Shall we be prepared?

The first step to adequate preparation it seems to me should be the creation of a smaller War Cabinet a War Cabinet ^{free} departmental responsibility thinking planning and imparting, through all the Departments drive and thrust to our war effort. A Budget in which we plan to devote to the war only two thirds of the resources which Germany is devoting to it marks the inadequacy of the Government's conception of the needs of the war. The fact that unemployment, in spite of the absorption of hundreds of thousands of men by the fighting forces is still only just under 1 000 000 is a similar mark. So is the inadequacy of the training schemes for unskilled and semi skilled labour and the failure to follow up the appeal of the First Lord of the Admiralty for 1 000 000 women to work in our war factories. Problems of supply are urgent especially the supremely important problem of aircraft production. The Government is giving us a one shift war while the Germans are working a three shift war. Foreigners are shocked by our complacency and by our failure to rouse ourselves out of our peace time routine. By all means let us rejoice to the top of our bent over fine deeds and bravely executed deeds like the Battle of the River Plate but we must eschew idle boastings and complacency like the plague. In a speech in London the other day the Chancellor of the Exchequer—who, I am sorry has just gone out though he will not mind my referring to it—said that in the course of this Debate Parliament would be satisfied and that when the whole situation was laid before an

impartial public its judgment would be that the action decided on was wisely taken on the best advice. It reminded me irresistibly of Macaulay's essay on Lord Mahon's "History of the War of the Spanish Succession." He referred to Lord Galway as

"An experienced veteran, a man who was in war what Moliere's doctors were in medicine, who thought it much more honourable to fail according to rule than to succeed by innovation. This great commander conducted the campaign of 1707 in the most scientific manner. On the plain of Almanza, he encountered the Army of the Bourbons. He drew up his troops according to the methods prescribed by the best writers, and in a few hours lost 18,000 men, 120 standards, all his baggage and all his artillery."

I dare say that the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with his well-known gift of persuasive advocacy, will be able to make us think that at every step everything was done according to the very best advice, that every move was inspired by the purest spirit of wisdom. At the same time, the sad fact remains that Germany is in occupation of the whole of Norway except the northern appendix, that air fields and submarine bases are there at her disposal, that we have suffered severe economic loss and that in every country of the world the prestige of Britain is affected. Time is not always on our side as I warned the House before Christmas. Hitler took the old man by the beard on this occasion. He struck swiftly. We must show equal swiftness and vigour in action if we are to win this war. Parliament must speak out to day, and to morrow. It must say that we must have done with half measures. Let us insist upon and rally to a policy of the more vigorous conduct of the war.

BRIGADIER-GENERAL SIR HENRY CROFT (Bournemouth): We are met here in a very solemn hour to consider the difficulties that have been presented to us, and I think we ought to look at them not as in the old days of political conflict, but standing together as citizens who are resolved to profit from any lessons which can be drawn from the past.

Also, I think many of us must have been deeply concerned to see, as the days have gone by, so many of our energies devoted to social problems and a little inclined to forget that if this war went against us, all our social fabric must collapse.

The right hon. Gentleman the Leader of the Opposition asked the Government whether it was not obvious that Hitler would put back directly the minefield was laid. It must be clear to all who have made a study of this question that it was weeks before the minefield was laid that soldiers were being hidden in cargo ships to be transported to Norway. Again, the right hon. Gentleman inquired, quite rightly, into the type of troops which were used. I know pretty well parts of the country where this fighting has been going on, and I know the landing places at two of the points of disembarkation, and I think he exaggerates the possibility that a large army of skiers could have got effectually

along two main valleys which I will mention in a moment. I do not suppose we had a very large force of these skilled winter sportsmen and I imagine also that they had been collected from many units and had been given varying instruction. I suppose it would be difficult for us to maintain a band of skilled persons, with officers in large numbers for every kind of undertaking when the need for instructors is so great in many units. He complained also that there were young boys and unseasoned men in the Forces which went to Norway. I think he will probably agree on reflection that since speed was the essence of the matter it would not have been possible suddenly to disband any part of the nearest division which was organised and available by taking out men in certain age categories.

MR ATTLEE. I understood that troops were being specially kept for this expedition and my point was that they should not have included troops who had had only two months' training.

SIR H. CROFT. I think that the right hon. Gentleman will find that when you have built up an Army so speedily as ours was built up and when you have had to send forces to all parts of the world and especially to main strategic centres such as the Maginot Line you cannot choose separate forces for various possible expeditions consisting of men of various ages. I point that out only because I think it is—[AN HON. MEMBER

Rubbish.] We could not have a force consisting only of the troops which were suggested. I think it transpired that regular troops were there.

bound to ask ourselves. How did this happen? The question was asked by the Prime Minister. Was this country right or wrong to intervene? I believe there is not a Member in this House who would not agree that when Norway was violated it was our absolute duty to do everything we possibly could, however great the difficulties, in order to stiffen and harden the Norwegian resistance. I do not think anyone here would say "No" to that now, and that side of the argument can be dismissed. If support was imperative, did the Government act on the advice of their technical advisers? This is a question which we have a right to ask. If the answer is "Yes," it seems to me that we have no right to criticise without full knowledge of the facts if the Government, acting through their technical advisers, decided to take their chance in what was admitted to be a risky military adventure.

The third question is: Did the Government offer aid to Norway before that event? I have always understood that it was a standing offer made at the time of the Finnish war, in view of the peril of German invasion. If we can be convinced that His Majesty's Government made it clear to the Norwegians that we were prepared to give them help before the event, a large part of the Press campaign is completely trampled. Having decided to enter this new theatre of war, what support, in fact, could we give? Owing to treachery, unsurpassed even, I suppose in the annals of German violation, and owing to complete lack of preparation and to internal treason the Norwegians allowed Germany to take control, before this or any other country could intervene, of every dock and harbour at which the heavy paraphernalia of war could be landed. We were left with flimsy jetties in comparatively small landing places where it was impossible to land anything speedily, except infantry very lightly equipped, but that support we immediately gave. Was it right or was it wrong? There is not a man of honour in this House who will deny that the action of the Government was right.

Again, every air port and air base in Norway had been ceded to the enemy by stunned Norwegians, and we were left without any possibility of using fighters—idle is the question. "Why were no fighters there?"—except on frozen lakes and with no ground-work or possibility of getting stores, equipment or petrol to their aid. If the conduct of His Majesty's Government had been craven and irresolute and if craven and irresolute counsels had prevailed, we should have funked it, but, to the eternal credit of this country, we did not, and we gave all the aid that it was possible to give.

The Navy instantly attacked at Narvik, with what everybody agreed were brilliant naval results. No one who knows the character of the First Lord of the Admiralty, of the First Sea Lord and of the Commander-in-Chief can doubt for a moment that they would have sought other opportunities also. Is it suggested for a moment—let us be fair in this difficult period in the history of the war—that the Prime Minister resisted

determination or desire for further naval action? I can hardly believe it. On the other hand did the Army press for a frontal attack in other harbours which were defended to the shore? Did they press that policy upon the Navy at that time? Take only one other naval phase that very remote possibility of doing something in the Skagerrak and the Oslo Fiord. Had the Oslo Fiord been defended by the Norwegians—many of us know that fiord—it is no exaggeration to say that the Germans would have required weeks to get it and would have suffered very heavy losses of the capital ships with which alone she could have subdued the fortresses there.

No Sir the other side of the picture is that the Germans were there. They manned the fortresses and we should have been risking major elements of our Fleet first through mines and secondly from the forts had we attempted to force them. Even in the Skagerrak I believe the history of this phase of the war will show that the story of what was done by British submarines will truly be an epic one. Would anyone who has knowledge of the naval facts of that part of the world deny that His Majesty's Government would hardly force the naval authorities to undertake adventures like that? I think we cannot deny that, three weeks ago we realised that the Navy had won the first decisive strategic stroke of the war.

How is it within some three weeks of that tremendous strategic gain that we suddenly find that certain elements in this country are being rendered despondent, despite that strategic action which gave us once more the power to assert ourselves if necessary in the Mediterranean or in the Black Sea if troubles occurred there? We all know that the Navy is our ultimate reality, but a fortnight after that strategic victory certain people and writers in the Press have enrolled themselves definitely under Dr Goebbels in what can only be described as a defeatist campaign. Let me remind the House how this matter started. An American correspondent writing from Stockholm declared that there had been a great disaster to British troops at Trondheim. Hon. Members know the story so I will not delay them by repeating it. Troops were landed from certain destroyers and were attacked. This was claimed as a disaster, in headlines in all the popular Press of this country on the saying of that American correspondent. Even the German *communiqué* on that action declared that the total British prisoners taken were only 200. That disaster which was presumed in this country has been passed round in many quarters by our Quislings. It was a minor technical mishap but it has been magnified into a great disaster to British arms.

I would ask the House to consider the main strategic situation. We have heard many criticisms. There were those who said that Herr Hitler would inevitably enter Norway when he was forming this force and training them in transport.

We had this situation where nobody knew where the blow was going to be struck. I must confess that when I first looked

at this question, it surprised me that any of these German troops could have got through. Then when I remembered that there were nearly 2,000 miles of sea in and out of the coast of Sweden and Norway and round the coast of Denmark, it occurred to me that it is rather a large sea and although it was bad luck that the Germans got through one cannot possibly watch that space of ocean all the time. Hitler's right flank after the Russo-Finnish peace was surely secured. He knew he would never have any more iron ore coming down the "rat-run" on the Norwegian coast. At the same time provided that Sweden maintained her neutrality, he would be sure of obtaining five months supply coming down to the Gulf of Bothnia after the ice melted. Therefore I cannot see what he had to gain from the strategic point of view by going into Scandinavia. What has he done? He has done the very thing which the whole of the German staff have preached against for the past 100 years. It may be that he is a prince amongst strategists as well as a prince amongst traitors and treacherous violators, but the fact remains that he obviously chose to go into Norway thinking that Norway would accept the protection of Germany in exactly the same way as Denmark did. He had some reason for doing so because he had thousands of agents in Norway. There were people ready to sell their country for money. He extended his right flank by over 1,000 miles and in doing so 40 per cent of the remainder of the German Fleet was wiped off the strategic chess board. Forty supply ships were definitely sunk, and although no one can tell how many casualties that involved amongst his fighting men, the estimates vary from the pessimists' 7,000 to the optimists' 25,000 . . .

Here Hitler and his Government from now onwards must keep in Norway at least 100,000 men until the end of the war. They have to feed them and clothe them. You cannot murder a country and expect the people to love you. You have to police that country. What Germany is finding in Czecho-Slovakia, Austria, and Poland it is finding in Norway also. But who can doubt that Hitler, with his right flank stretched out 1,000 miles, subject always to possible attacks by sea power, has entered upon a road which is a departure from all the military reasons and strategy which has come down to him and his people through the ages?

This incident, unfortunate as it is—and who will belittle it?—may have strategic effects just the opposite to what is hoped in Germany. Whatever may be the truth, the fact remains that this is a lesson to us. We have a very great and grim peril hanging over our heads, and I shall say to all my friends, whatever may be their different shades of opinion: "If you are convinced that you can find a better man then put him there." If you believe that this kind of attack in the Press this unfair sabotage, is wrong, if you still believe in democracy, then, I suggest, if you really want a change, you should not play with the question . . .

unless we walked into Belgium before the lightning stroke took place, it would be very dangerous for us to attempt to do it after it had taken place. I would point out to the Government that so long as the neutrals are in the hands of Herr Hitler it is ruinous for us to be tied by pledges to defend Rumania and Jugoslavia. We cannot possibly do it. A pledge which we cannot implement is valueless. We get at the present time nothing out of that pledge whatever save fresh risks. It would be far better if we arranged with Turkey to defend the Chataldja line rather than promise help which we cannot give to Rumania.

Finally, I come to the question of Narvik. We have not yet taken Narvik. I doubt whether we shall take it for a long time to come, but we do want to avoid there the same sort of disaster that we have had at Trondheim. The Germans three or four thousand of them are all safely quartered in Narvik and our troops are outside among rocks and snow, where it is impossible to dig themselves in and to house themselves properly, with the danger increasing every day with the approach of the relieving German troops.

I presume that all this has been considered by the Government. All that I now say is that, if I were in the Government, I would *immediately, either take these troops out, or get into touch with* Russia and see whether we could not arrange for them to come in and take our place. [Laughter] I really do not understand what there is to laugh at. I am perfectly aware that there are one or two Conservative Members who think that Russia's assistance would be almost worse than defeat by Germany. Personally, I think we want all the help we can get in this war, and the sooner we get Russian help, and any American help, the better it will be. One of our greatest difficulties at the present time is that we have this sullen, stupid rupture with Russia based mostly upon snobbery and upon the hatred of Bolshevism or some silly nonsense of that sort. We have to collect our friends from where we can, and the sooner we have a trade treaty with Russia—that trade can only come round the North from Archangel through dangerous waters at the present time—the better it will be in the end. Russia is as terrified of Germany as any

duce, but we will not pay. We will keep the workers and keep you alive; you must all work for the Government." This is a lie. The whole question to-day is how we are going to get this country through a long war, when we can no longer borrow money, and have to live by exporting and producing. Under these circumstances we must have maximum national effort, not this slipshod method of carrying on hand to mouth as at the present time. We must have everybody doing not merely what they are told in return for their rations, but we must have the Empire contributing its part too. The Colonies have not been increasing their production as they should, their effort has not been comparable with that made by India in the last war. India, for the first two years of the last war did nothing, but after that produced munitions, jute and cotton for themselves and for the export trade of the Empire. It is just as important that natives in West Africa should produce and export cocoa as that we in this country should produce and export steel. It all helps to keep this country alive, and unless the Government do get this conception of the total maximum production of wealth we shall fail and not be able to hold out as long as Hitler.

It is for that reason that I hope we shall get on that Bench a Government which can take this war seriously instead of being prepared to go on in the old style and thinking this is a replica of 1914. We are living in a new world and this is a new war, the end of which may be the utter destruction of the British people. Whatever our parties everyone would sacrifice his life, position and everything else in order to achieve our salvation.

ADMIRAL OF THE FLEET SIR ROGER KEYES (Portsmouth, North): After a brief respite from the irresponsible musings of my right hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle under-Lyme (Colonel Wedgwood) I came back to the House and heard him saying that the British Navy ran to the Eastern Mediterranean and had gone to Alexandria because they were frightened of bombs. That is a damned insult—

Land on the Western Front, and finally and decisively by the exaggerated fears in Whitehall of dangers which the men on the spot were ready to face and overcome. If only I could have then—as my right hon. Friend said—"placed the credentials 'Zeebrugge on the table,' the forcing of the Dardanelles would have been accomplished. Once again there is a deadlock on the Western Front. If only we had used our sea power vigorously and courageously, the German army in Norway would by now be in a very dangerous position, and would eventually have been decisively defeated.

In this war, thanks to my early promotion, I am supposed to be too senior and out of date for my opinions to be worth consideration. I am told that I do not appreciate the immensity of the German air menace in Norway, and that I am living in the last war. It is because I do appreciate to the full the dangers of air attack, and the limitations of air attack if it is properly countered and resisted by fighter aeroplanes and ground defences, that I have been urging that every possible step should be taken to ensure the capture of Trondheim and its vitally important aerodrome at Vaernes, to provide a base for our fighters in order that they may give the support required. During 1918, when I was in command of the Dover Patrol, Dunkirk was our advanced base. Hundreds of tons of bombs were dropped on its harbours and quays. It is true that my headquarters there were obliterated, but in those 10 months only one bomb hit one ship and slightly damaged it, and our casualties were very few. On Thursday, the Prime Minister told us that the evacuation of Southern Norway was made imperative by the air menace, and to day he made this more clear. Within a few hours of his statement last week—and again to day—the Admiralty issued a *communiqué* which discounted this, and showed the amazingly low percentage of hits achieved by the German aircraft in the face of opposition. We know now that the troops were in good heart, and I believe the French and certainly the British General were furious at the evacuation.

By chance, on Friday last, I met a young officer from one of our anti aircraft cruisers, who told me that they had had about 120 heavy bombs dropped round the two convoys which she escorted into Namsos, no damage was done, and the only diving attack which was made was beaten off and five German aircraft were destroyed. I asked him whether it was very alarming, he laughed and said, "One soon gets accustomed to it." I am immensely proud of all that our Navy and its sea soldiers and splendid young naval airmen have done in the Norwegian campaign, and I am full of admiration for the sub mariners—whom I once had the honour to command for four and a half years—for their undomitable spirit and for what they have achieved. It would seem that the attacks on the flow of German ships going into Oslo have fallen mainly on their shoulders.

I have great admiration and affection for my right hon. Friend

the First Lord of the Admiralty I am longing to see proper use made of his great abilities. I cannot believe it will be done under the existing system. The war cannot be won by committees and those responsible for its prosecution must have full power to act without the delays of conferences. A great friend of the First Lord of the Admiralty remarked to me that the iron of Gallipoli had entered into the soul of my right hon. Friend after he was submerged in the political upheaval which followed his difference of opinion with his Principal Naval Adviser. Sir, the iron of Gallipoli entered into my soul too for it was torture to watch the sufferings of the men on Gallipoli Peninsula and their daily losses when I knew it could all be put an end to by bold Naval action. However I was given an opportunity of regaining confidence in my judgment when I was allowed to wage war on the Belgium Coast and in the Dover Straits. My right hon. Friend has not had his opportunity yet. At that time he had many enemies who discredited his judgment and welcomed his downfall. Now however he has the confidence of the War Cabinet as was made abundantly clear to me when I tried to interest them in my project, he has the confidence of the Navy and indeed of the whole country which is looking to him to help to win the war. I am certain that to-morrow night he will deliver a very fierce counter attack on me because he is always loyal to his friends and his colleagues but having done that I do hope he will accept my view which after all, is based on experience precedent and achievement. I beg him to steel his heart and take the steps that are necessary to ensure that more vigorous Naval action in Norway is no longer delayed if he does he will have the Navy wholeheartedly behind him. Farwood and his captains are typical of the Navy to-day. There are hundreds of young officers who are waiting eagerly to seize Warburton Lees torch or emulate the deeds of Vian of the *Tossack*. One hundred and forty years ago Nelson said I am of the opinion that the boldest measures are the safest and that still holds good to-day.

MR LEWIS JONES (Swansea West) At no other period in the history of the country has there been such need for national unity and I suppose that at no time has so much lip service been paid to the ideal of national unity with such unreality. We on all sides of the House belonging to all political parties have pledged ourselves that Hitler must go and I am surprised to find that the concern of many Members in this House appears to be that the Prime Minister should go. I am convinced after careful inquiries in the country that the continuous political barracking which is going on is sapping the will and determination of hundreds of thousands of brave men and women who have sacrificed life to take their part in this great war. I am satisfied too that political intrigue will more swiftly than anything else bring about our downfall as a nation.

There is a difference between playing for your party and playing

for your country, and I suggest that those who are at the present time carrying on political propaganda and strengthening the Fifth Column movement in this country should turn their attention to co-operating in the great struggle in which we are engaged. In that way they would render a service to the nation

CAPTAIN BELLINGER (Bassetlaw) The right hon. Gentleman the Prime Minister introduced into this Debate a somewhat novel feature. He informed us that the General Staff had advised him that it would be inappropriate, I think he used the words "even dangerous," for a Debate in this House on this subject to take place at the present time. I notice that the Secretary of State for War is on the Front Bench, and perhaps he may answer a question that I wish to put to him. Is it the function of the General Staff to suggest to the Prime Minister whether a Debate should take place in this House or not? Is it not more their function to advise the Prime Minister on questions affecting strategy and tactics rather than questions affecting Parliamentary procedure? I am very glad that the Prime Minister, in spite of the advice he received, was able to allow this Debate to take place because I think it is vitally necessary that without any party animosity we should examine whether a mistake has been made, and by whom, in order to make it impossible, or at any rate to make it almost impossible, that the same mistake should be repeated in future.

We should endeavour to concentrate our criticism on the Government's handling of the strategic situation. It is Government's duty to define their objects. It is for the General Staff, when these objects are clearly defined, to work out plans and operations. I would ask the Secretary of State for War and any hon. Member who knows something about strategy or tactics whether it is wiser to consider strategy in all its aspects in calm moments when the General Staff can prepare their plans, or whether it is more advisable, as the Prime Minister told us this afternoon actually took place, for plans and operations to be decided in panic such as they were in Norway, when, so we are told, the Commander-in-Chief of the Norwegian forces issued an urgent demand requesting us to send troops to his help. It was not that we did not know the intentions of the German High Command or the German political régime. Intelligence simply overloaded the wires, apart from intelligence conveyed to us from our attachés and consuls in Norway and different places far away from that country. Some of this was open for any staff officer to see, and the Government themselves admit that they knew far in advance that there was a likelihood of the Germans breaking the neutrality of Norway. If that is the case why did not the Government give directions to the General Staff to prepare plans or operations to meet that eventuality? That is my main criticism against the Government. We have an efficient General Staff, although what I believe we have not got to day is

efficient and able direction from the central governmental authority.

The right hon. Gentleman the Prime Minister rather deprecated our bad luck, as he called it, in that we or the Norwegian Army were not able to demolish as many bridges or block as many roads as we thought we might do. Surely these are all matters which are thought out in advance before operations take place. In the heat of battle it is not possible to demolish bridges and go through all the operations which a modern Army has to perform unless the Army is given clear and precise operation orders. I suggest that there was no chance of giving these operation orders to the Norwegian or the British Armies. As regards the lack of knowledge which the Government seem to have, I wonder what has been happening to our counter espionage service. I thought that this was a recognised feature of peace time policy, but in war-time these services are greatly augmented, and if our service was doing its duty properly, the Government should have been more than adequately informed of the intention of Germany and perhaps the approximate time when the German Command would strike in Norway.

The material that we have in the troops who have been called up, thousands of them against their will—for which this House is responsible—is excellent. There is a danger of that material running to seed. I do not profess to speak for the Army in France, but I speak as a member of that Force who hears conversations in messes, which are different from conversations in pubs. I have the opportunity, too, because it is part of the duty of officers to censor letters of reading something of what the troops are saying. Although one does not pay particular attention to every sentence one sometimes comes across sentences that cut like a knife in the drab surroundings under which members of the forces write their letters. They give a clear indication—and I do not expect my experience is novel—that there is confusion in the minds of the troops serving on the Western Front. They are not engaged in battle yet and have plenty of time to consider what is happening at home. Not only among men but among officers too, the thought arises in their minds that we have too old a Cabinet. They make comparisons between the ages of the leaders of Germany, Russia and Italy with the ages of their own leaders. They bear in mind that there has been a purge in the army and that a similar process is going on in certain Territorial units from which commanding officers are ruthlessly removed if they do not show signs of carrying out their jobs properly.

If they see that and see at the same time that the game of musical chairs is being played in political circles and among statesmen, what will be their reactions? They will say, "You can do this in the Army, you can remove commanding officers and send them home on courses or for more instructions but in the Government you have the same old circle going round and round . . ." Even if this House is satisfied with the

ment, I am certain that many of those serving in the Army to-day are not

MR AMERY (Birmingham, Spafkbrook) . . . The whole of Parliament has a grave responsibility at this moment, for, after all, it is Parliament itself that is on trial in this war. If we lose this war, it is not this or that ephemeral Government but Parliament as an institution that will be condemned for good and all. I fully realise that this is not an easy Debate. There is much that ought to be said which cannot well be said in public. After listening to some of the speeches to-day, not least the profoundly impressive speech made by my hon and gallant Friend the Member for North Portsmouth (Sir R. Keyes) it seems to me that the whole of recent events—not only in Norway, but the whole conduct of the war up to date—calls for searching inquiry, not for one stray private sitting, but for a series of private sittings in which all that Members of Parliament can contribute of their private knowledge should be put into the common stock and frankly discussed.

Meanwhile, even to-day there is plenty that can be said, that ought to be said, and that must be said frankly, for there are no loyalties to-day except to the common cause. This afternoon, as a few days ago, the Prime Minister gave us a reasoned, argumentative case for our failure. It is always possible to do that after every failure. Making a case and winning a war are not the same thing. Wars are won, not by explanations after the event but by foresight, by clear decision and by swift action. I confess that I did not feel there was one sentence in the Minister's speech this afternoon which suggested that the Government either foresaw what Germany meant to do or came to a clear decision when it knew what Germany had done, or acted swiftly or consistently throughout the whole of this lamentable affair. I am not going to discuss the reasons for the actual evacuation. They may well have been conclusive in the circumstances. But the circumstances should never have arisen, and it is the story of those events—of the decisions, of the absence of decisions, of the changes of decisions which brought about those circumstances—which call for our inquiry and raise many questions which have yet to be answered.

We were told by the Prime Minister on 2nd May that all except a relatively small advance guard of the Expeditionary Force which was earmarked for Finland had gone elsewhere and the ships had been taken for employment for other purposes. Even the small, inadequate nucleus that was kept in being had no transports except warships. Why was this done? For months we had been aware that the Germans had been accumulating troops and transports and practising embarkation and disembarkation against somebody. It is perfectly true that they could spare the ships better than we could. But was there any reason which would us believe that they were sending the men elsewhere? The danger was there and might develop into actuality.

at any moment. The Prime Minister suggested that we could not know which of many objectives it might be. Surely we had some good reasons for suspecting which one it might be. The Finnish war had focused the interests of the whole world on Scandinavia. Within a week of its termination the Prime Minister declared, speaking of Norway and Sweden, that the danger to them—from Germany—"stands upon their very doorstep." The *Altmark* affair had before that showed clearly the illegal uses which Germany was prepared to make of Norwegian neutrality. What is more, within a few days of that statement we ourselves decided deliberately to challenge Germany over her use of Norway's territorial waters. All the world knew that that was the main theme of the deliberations of the Supreme War Council which met, I think, on 28th March. To make that perfectly clear to the whole world, including Germany, the Prime Minister said, on 2nd April: "We have not yet reached the limit of our effective operations in waters close to the German bases." That was sufficient warning. On 8th April we laid our mines.

What did we expect to follow? Did we know Hitler and his merry men so little as to think that their rejoinder would be slow or half-hearted, or that it would follow the lines of "too little and too late" with which we have been so familiar here? However, it was not a question of a German rejoinder at all, but of Germany taking our half-hearted intervention an excuse for measures far greater in scope and far more daring than we seem even to have envisaged. My hon. and gallant Friend the Member for Bournemouth (Sir H. Croft) was congratulating ourselves upon Hitler's strategic folly in going to Norway. Does he realise that, from the moment we were in the war, Admiral Raeder insisted that thus alone the German Navy could not afford to be confined to the existing German coastline, but that, for the purposes of his air and submarine warfare, he must have not only egress from the Baltic but the whole of the indented, deep water coastline of

railway and had it detached from the train at a siding near where he expected to find a certain man-eating lion. He went to rest and dreamed of hunting his lion in the morning. Unfortunately, the lion was out man hunting that night. He clambered on to the rear of the car, scrambled open the sliding door, and ate my friend. That is in brief the story of our initiative over Norway. In any case, even if we did not realise that the Germans were acting at the same time, why were we not prepared to meet their inevitable counter stroke? We had only this inadequate little force without transports of which the Prime Minister has told us in readiness to occupy Norwegian ports if there were German action against Southern Norway. There was no plan to meet the contingency that Germany might seize the western ports as well or to meet any really serious attack by Germany upon Norway. As we know now, the German detachments for the more distant ports Trondheim and Narvik, were despatched more than a week before, in readiness for the zero hour when all the German forces were to strike.

On 8th April we laid our mines. That time happened to be just before Germany's zero hour. On the morning of that day a great German convoy sailed up the Kattegat and into the Skagerrak on its highly dangerous mission. To cover this daring manoeuvre the Germans sent a large part of their fleet 48 hours before away up the West coast of Norway towards Narvik. That action was duly reported to us and the Prime Minister has told us that the Navy went off in hot pursuit after that German decoy. Rarely in history can a feint have been more successful? The gallantry of our officers and men in the blizzards of the Arctic, and the losses of the German fleet, serious as they were, do not alter the fact that the main German expedition to Norway took place without any interference from the Fleet, except from our submarines. With amazing courage and resolution, our submarines inflicted heavy losses on the Germans. How much heavier would those losses have been if the Fleet or any substantial portion of it had been there then or, at any rate, on subsequent days. That raises very formidable questions to which answers will have to be given sooner or later.

However, let me come to the next stage. What was our reaction when we learned that Oslo and all the main ports were in German hands? If we had any hope of retrieving the situation in Norway even partially or of relieving the Norwegian forces, our obvious move was to retake one or other of those ports without a moment's delay. We now know that the Germans seized them with only the tiniest handful of men. Only by seizing such a port would it have been possible to obtain landing facilities for our artillery, tanks and aeroplanes above all without which re-operation can now be conducted with any hope of success. The port clearly indicated by the circumstances was Trondheim, because it was farthest removed from the main German base at Oslo—which gave us time and the opportunity of maintaining,

railway connection with Sweden. We could have constructed a defensive line across the waist of Norway, behind which the Norwegian forces could have rallied, and from which we could have advanced, if necessary, to the reconquest of the country. That was the obvious plan.

The Prime Minister's statements, however, make it clear that such forces as we had were at once sent off to Narvik, and not to their original destination of Trondheim or Bergen. Why Narvik? If we had held Trondheim, the isolated German force at Narvik would have been bound to surrender in time, and it could have done no mischief to us in the meantime. If we had ever contemplated retaking Trondheim at the start, there could have been no more crass instance of the dispersion, the frittering away, of forces. It is clear, however, from what the Prime Minister said to day that the decision to send troops to Trondheim to try and retrieve that position was taken only after a number of days, and only at the urgent request of the Norwegians. How was it carried out? We have listened to the impressive speech of my hon. and gallant Friend the Member for North Portsmouth. It is common knowledge that the original plan accepted by the Government for the taking of Trondheim was that the Navy should force itself into Narvik fiord while subsidiary landings took place to North and South. Once in the fiord our ships could command the whole of its vast coastline, with its roads and railway and its aerodrome. What we are entitled to ask is a very serious question. By whom and on whose authority was the indispensable hammer blow at Trondheim itself countermanded? Of course, there were risks. War is not won by shirking risks. Once the linch pin of the Trondheim operations was withdrawn, the rest was bound to fail precisely as it has failed.

As to those operations, there are many stories that reach us which cannot be discussed here. Our men did their best in impossible conditions, and one can only be glad that they got away. At the same time there is something which I feel bound to say. The Prime Minister, both the other day and to day, expressed himself as satisfied that the balance of advantage lay on our side. He laid great stress on the heaviness of the German losses and the lightness of ours. What did the Germans lose? A few thousand men, nothing to them, a score of transports, and part of the Navy which anyhow will not match ours. What did they gain? They gained Norway, with the strategical advantages which in their opinion at least outweigh the whole of their naval losses. They have gained the whole of Scandinavia. What have we lost? To begin with, we have lost most of the Norwegian Army, not only such as it was but such as it might have become if only we had been given time to rally and re-equip it. It goes to one's heart to think of the Norwegian forces trapped in southern Norway and forced to surrender after their bitter protest against our withdrawal. I am glad that the right hon. Gentlemen the Leader of the Liberal Opposition paid the tribute which he did

to the gallantry of the Norwegian troops under adverse circumstances. What we have lost, above all, is one of those opportunities which do not recur in war. If we could have captured and held Trondheim and if we could have rallied the Norwegian forces, then we might well have imposed a strain on Germany which might have made Norway to Hitler what Spain was once to Napoleon. All we can hope for now is that we may hang on to Narvik, and that will not be too easy, till the tide of war turns against Germany elsewhere. So much for the Norwegian chapter. It is a bad story, a story of lack of prevision and of preparation, a story of indecision, slowness and fear of taking risks. If only it stood alone. Unfortunately, it does not. It is only of a piece with the rest of it, of a piece with our hesitation and slowness in responding to Finland's appeals for arms, in our handling of economic warfare and the reorganisation of industry, of our retraining of our workers, of the production of the essential munitions of war, of agriculture—in fact, the whole of our national effort, which, according to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, is apparently to be at most 10 per cent. higher in the course of this year than it is to-day.

The right hon. Gentleman the Prime Minister—I fully understand the good reason for his absence—in a digression explained why he used a certain unlucky phrase about Hitler missing the bus. He explained that what he meant was that during these eight months of war Hitler had lost the opportunity which he had at the beginning of the war because we had been catching up on Germany's preparations. Believe me, that is very far from the truth. While we may catch up on her presently if only we do what we ought to, there is no doubt that during these eight months, thanks to Germany's flying start and our slowness off the mark, the gap between the German forces and ours has widened enormously as far as troops, their equipment, tanks, guns and all the paraphernalia of land war are concerned. It has widened in the air, even if we reckon in things which may be "accruing" to us. That is a curious phrase, the precise meaning of which is difficult to determine. I remember that on the very morning of that speech I was reading the financial statement of a company which among its prospects included interest accruing to it from a mine in which gold had not yet been discovered.

We cannot go on as we are. There must be a change. First and foremost, it must be a change in the system and structure of our governmental machine. This is war, not peace. The essence of peace time democratic government is discussion, conference and agreement, the Cabinet is in a sense a miniature Parliament. The main aim is agreement, the widest possible measure of agreement. To secure that it is necessary to compromise, to postpone, to rediscuss. Under those conditions there are no far-reaching plans for sudden action. It is a good thing to let policies develop as you go along and get people educated by circumstances that may or may not be ideal in peace. It is impossible in war.

In war the first essential is planning ahead¹ The next essential is swift, decisive action

1 We can wage war only on military principles One of the first of these principles is the clear definition of individual responsibilities—not party responsibilities or Cabinet responsibilities—and, with it, a proper delegation of authority What commander-in-chief attempts to command 20 or 30 divisions in the field? He delegates the task to a number of army corps commanders responsible to him alone, and with authority over the divisional commanders underneath them The last thing such a commander-in-chief would ever dream of doing is to make some of his army corps commanders divisional commanders as well What is our present Cabinet system? There are some 25 Ministers, heads of Departments, who have no direct chief above them except the Prime Minister How often do they see him? How often can they get from him direct advice, direct impulse, direct drive? Who is to settle disputes between them? There should be someone not chairmen of innumerable committees but someone with authority over these Ministers and directly responsible for their efficiency

There is another cardinal principle of warfare that is, the clear separation of the framing and execution of policy and the planning of operations, from administration That is why every Army, Navy and Air Force has its General Staff It is well known that the same man cannot do the work of administration and also frame and execute policy How can you get either policy or administration from a Cabinet in which the two are mixed up hugger mugger as they are at the present time? The next blow may fall at any moment It may be in Holland, it may be in the Mediterranean How many hours has any of the three Service Ministers been able to give during the last three weeks to the innumerable preparations required for that contingency? With the present organisation, there is not the slightest chance for them to consider these matters properly

The Prime Minister has told us to day of the change that he has made in at last giving a director and guide to the Chiefs of Staff Committee He said that this struck him as being a good idea For four years or more, ever since the Chiefs of Staff Committee was first spoken of in this House, some of us have said that it was impossible to produce adequate plans from a committee of men representing three separate Services, and each concerned to guard the interests of his own Service, without a chief over them The result has inevitably been what I might call plans based on "the feeblest common denominator" Now at last something is done to place the responsibility for framing and deciding plans clearly upon my right hon Friend The Prime Minister tells us that this has no connection with recent events in Norway, it is just a happy new idea It is curious how we have for years now so effectively been locking the stable door after we have discovered the loss of the horse Anyhow, if those

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are the right functions for my right hon Friend how can he also carry on the tremendous tasks of the First Lord of the Admiralty? The Leader of the Opposition said that it was not fair to him. It is not fair to his colleagues. It is not fair to the nation.

Believe me as long as the present methods prevail all our valour and all our resources are not going to see us through. Above all so long as they prevail time is not going to be on our side because they are methods which inevitably and inherently waste time and weaken decisions. What we must have and have soon is a supreme war directorate of a handful of men free from administrative routine free to frame policy among themselves and with the task of supervising inspiring and impelling a group of departments clearly allocated to each one of them. That is the only way. We learned that in the last war. My right hon Friend the Member for Carnarvon Boroughs (Mr Lloyd George) earned the undying gratitude of the nation for the courage he showed in adopting what was then a new experiment. The experiment worked and it helped to win the war. After the war years the Committee of Imperial Defence laid it down as axiomatic that while in a minor war you might go on with an ordinary Cabinet helped perhaps by a War Committee in a major war you must have a War Cabinet—meaning precisely the type of Cabinet that my right hon Friend introduced then. The overwhelming opinion of this House and of the public outside has been demanding that for all this time. We are told that there would be no particular advantage in it at the present time. I ask, Is this or is this not a major war?

We must have first of all a right organisation of government. What is no less important to day is that the Government shall be able to draw upon the whole abilities of the nation. It must represent all the elements of real political power in this country, whether in this House or not. The time has come when hon and right hon Members opposite must definitely take their share of the responsibility. The time has come when the organisation the power and influence of the Trades Unions Congress cannot be left outside. It must through one of its recognised leaders reinforce the strength of the national effort from inside. The time has come in other words for a real National Government. I may be asked what is my alternative Government. That is not my concern. It is not the concern of this House. The duty of this House and the duty that it ought to exercise is to show unmistakably what kind of Government it wants in order to win the war. It must always be left to some individual leader, working perhaps with a few others to express that will by selecting his colleagues so as to form a Government which will correspond to the will of the House and enjoy its confidence. So I refuse. I hope that House will refuse, to be drawn into a discussion on personalities.

What I would say however, is this. Just as our peace time system is unsuitable for war conditions so does it tend to breed

peace-time statesmen who are not too well fitted for war conditions. Facility in debate, ability to state a case, caution in advancing an unpopular view, compromise and procrastination are the natural qualities—I might almost say, virtues—of a political leader in time of peace. They are fatal qualities in war. Vision, daring, swiftness and consistency of decision are the very essence of victory. In our normal politics, it is true that the conflict of party did encourage a certain combative spirit. In the last war we Tories found that the most perniciously aggressive of our opponents, the right hon. Member for Carnarvon Boroughs, was not only aggressive in words, but was a man of action. In recent years the normal weakness of our political life has been accentuated by a coalition based upon no clear political principles. It was in fact begotten of a false alarm as to the disastrous results of going off the Gold Standard. It is a coalition which has been living ever since in a twilight atmosphere between Protection and Free Trade and surely, for the Government of the last ten years to have bred a band of warrior statesmen would have been little short of a miracle. We have waited for eight months and the miracle has not come to pass. Can we afford to wait any longer?

Somehow or other we must get into the Government the men who can match our enemies in fighting spirit, in daring, in resolution and in thirst for victory. Some 300 years ago, when this House found that its troops were being beaten again and again by the dash and daring of the Cavaliers by Prince Rupert's Cavalry, Oliver Cromwell spoke to John Hampden. In one of his speeches he recounted what he said. It was this:

"I said to him 'Your troops are most of them old decayed serving men and tapsters and such kind of fellows.' You must get men of a spirit that are likely to go as far as they will go, or you will be beaten still."

In what way they have failed, it is easy to throw about charges of ineptitude inability and procrastination without specifying exactly to what degree those charges are able to be substantiated. I suggest that it was because neither Norway nor Sweden stood up for themselves at a critical time when by standing up for themselves they would have enabled us to give them adequate help that the position became so bad that help was impossible. It was not British incompetence which led to the British failure in Norway. It was Norwegian treachery. [HON MEMBERS "Shame"] Treachery of Norwegian officials. It is perfectly true. The Norwegian people are putting up a gallant fight, but it was the Quislings who sold the pass. It was through no fault of ours that conditions were such as to make success entirely impossible. It was through no fault of ours that we could not get aerodromes in Norway from which to operate our forces. It was by reason of the action of Norwegian officials who allowed Germany to come in. However much the setback in Norway may have effected us so far as our own feelings are concerned it does not make the slightest difference to our ultimate winning of the war. What real cause is there for blame? If people inside and outside this House are going to squeal every time there is some minor setback—[An HON MEMBER: We are not squealing!] The hon Member is quite right. The country is not squealing. If people will try to find disaster in every minor setback, what will they do when in the course of the war, we meet with real reverses as we may well do before we achieve victory?

We should thank God at the present time that by the reason of our Naval action in Norwegian waters Hitler has sacrificed a great portion of the navy which is vital to him. When the war started we had none too large a margin of sea power. No amount of lying by Germany will hide the fact that she has taken a very bad knock in Norway. The right hon Gentleman the Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Sir A. Sinclair) seemed to me to be belittling what the Navy had done. The position to day is immeasurably better than it was before the invasion of Norway. Let there be changes if changes are necessary, but let us remember that if the fall of this or any other Government, even a Government from the other side of the House during war time is due to intrigue the effect abroad would be incalculable.

Let us face the fact that those who in this country demand—quite rightly—a more intense prosecution of the war will not be able to go on living in the conditions in which they are living to day. I believe you cannot go to war successfully unless you do so 100 per cent, you have to be prepared to take knocks as well as give them. We have taken a minor knock in Norway. Do not let us be cast down.

MAJOR MILNER (Leeds, South East) Like many hon Members in all parties, I have not sought to embarrass or hamper

the Government, and since last September I have felt it right to support them in every way in their conduct of the war; but the time has come when I feel it to be my bounden duty to make it clear that I—and I believe the majority of my constituents—are profoundly dissatisfied with recent events. I believe it is essential that some drastic change must take place if the war is to be won, as we wish it to be, in the shortest time and with the least loss of life. . . .

Let me say at once that I make no complaint whatever against our land, sea or air Forces. . . . Nor do I complain of the decision to evacuate Southern Norway in the circumstances in which our Forces were placed, and I pay the highest tribute to those who took part in that evacuation. What I complain of—and I understand this is the feeling of the majority of hon. Members who have spoken—is the obvious lack of foresight, inadequate preparation, misleading expectations and statements, and the deadly complacency of some Members of the Government, which has even been in evidence in the Debate to-day. The Prime Minister told us that the number of our troops in Norway was small—not more than a division. The number was small, he said, because the Government had reason to think that a small force would be sufficient to take and hold the ports, but he went on to say that it was not found to be sufficient because we were forestalled. Why was the possibility of our being forestalled never considered and provision made for it? The Government have told us repeatedly—the Prime Minister has told us in more than one speech that they had information for many weeks as to practice embarkations, the massing of transports, and so on. Yet, clearly, they did not make adequate provision for that possibility. Clearly, they were guilty of lack of foresight, lack of planning, and lack of preparation.

The Prime Minister told us that the failure was due to two things—the inability to obtain aerodromes, and the rapid German advance. But when the decision to send troops to Norway was taken, it was known that all the aerodromes were in German occupation. Therefore, the Government either underestimated the value of aerodromes in enemy hands, or they simply gambled on the result. In either event, their judgment was at fault. It was again at fault in under-estimating the speed of the advance of the German army. Is it not obvious to all of us that we were unprepared and that the Government's judgment was faulty? In modern war there is no excuse for such mistakes.

mean a coalition. It need not mean that any party will lose its identity, but it would, in my submission, mean resolution, determination, power, a pooling of resources and action. Such surpeme direction would be and should be subject to examination in the House. It is not for a humble backbencher to say how or when in what form, or under what conditions such a change could be made, but I believe that the time for it is now.

EARL WINTERTON (Horsham) There was a great deal in the speech of the hon. and gallant Member for South East Leeds (Major Milner) with which I am in agreement, and I regret to have to say that there was almost nothing in the speech of my hon. and gallant Friend the Member for Epsom (Sir A. Southby) with which I find myself in agreement. I approach this matter from an entirely impartial point of view. I am concerned solely with the facts and not with the party aspect of the question. My hon. and gallant Friend said that it was a mistake to squeal at a minor setback. In the first place, I do not think anybody in this House or in the country is squealing. In the second place, I cannot imagine a greater abuse of language than to describe what happened in Norway as 'a minor setback'. It has been a most serious rebuff, the consequences of which we cannot yet measure. But they are bound to be grave.

To-day we live in tremendous earth shaking times when no institution can say that it is immune from possible catastrophe and obliteration if it resists the impact of events. I should like to say, as one of the oldest Members of this House, with the greatest respect and with the greatest emphasis that it would be well that this House should take notice of the situation with which it is faced in the country and in Europe, and should take action accordingly. If the situation in Norway turns out to be as grave as many of us fear it will, and we all must pray that that must not be so, I myself would be inclined to advocate that there shall be some form of inquiry into the circumstances, possibly a committee or commission of inquiry presided over by a Law Lord with two High Court Judges, who would have power to examine both military and civil officials concerned, the lowest and the highest from the Prime Minister to the Chief of Staff, to discover what the causes of the setback were.

I should like to say, speaking as a Gallipoliite, like the right hon. and gallant Member for Newcastle under-Lyme (Colonel Wedgwood) and the Leader of the Opposition that those who were in Gallipoli greatly regret to this day that some Minister or Ministers were not impeached and some high generals not court-martialled for what occurred in that place. In saying that I wish expressly to exclude from my condemnation the First Lord of the Admiralty. I am not concerned with personalities. [Interruption] If any of my hon. Friends are inclined to sneer at that let me tell them that I do not in the least care whether A, B, C, D, E,

F, or G is Prime Minister of this country as long as we win the war. I am concerned far more with the question of policy. My main reason for rising to speak in this Debate is to press the case for a completely different approach on the part of all parties and the Press, with some exceptions, to the problems of the war. I associate myself with everything said by previous speakers in what has been a very remarkable Debate with a very high level of eloquence, in saying that this is going to be an infinitely rougher and harder road than they have been told hitherto. If we traverse it certain victory lies ahead but if we do not defeat the Germans a German army of occupation and complete subjugation awaits all, both sides of the House and every Member in it, everyone in the country and the whole nation.

There are too many so called leaders of opinion in this country, addressing the nation as if it mainly consisted of maiden aunts and old women in trousers. On the contrary, this nation is one of the most vigorous and virile the earth has ever produced and when the people are really aroused as in 1914, and again in March, 1918 they fight like tiger cats for their young and are matched by their Allies the French, who, when properly led, are incomparable and irresistible. Let it go out to the world that together these two countries command in their two Empires, personnel of all races and colours but united in loyalty to the Tricolour and Union Jack and properly organised and prepared, with the material resources available, could withstand the whole world . . .

All parties and leaders of parties have in my opinion failed to put across the tremendous nature of the task, the vast issue at stake and the terrific sacrifices that are required to make victory certain. That in my judgment, has been the trouble all along.

I have spoken of an alteration in our approach road to the problem. I think that one good example of our wrong approach is the method by which through the wireless and other ways we address the German people. What is the situation? Not all, but the majority of Germans young and old, men and women are utterly ruthless and determined to dominate Europe and seize the French and British Empires. That has been their policy ever since Hitler came to power. A very efficient nation by nature it is attuned to violence and rigid discipline and preparedness and has been over a series of years. Never in history has any country entered upon a war where the great majority of its people were so prepared, trained and harnessed to the art of waging war on its civilian and military sides as were the Germans in September. Let us remember another thing which is too often ignored by public opinion in this country. These people, rightly or wrongly—wrongly as we think, rightly as they think—follow Hitler with a fanatical devotion comparable only to followers of Genghis Khan or the Prophet Mohammed in Moslem ascendancy. They believe, as in 1914 that "Germany over all." They think that the Kaiser failed

he was not big enough and because he allowed treachery at home. They think that, and not that they were defeated by the allied armies and fleets.

You cannot appeal to such people by moral exordiums. Right or wrong mean nothing to them, only superior force and its effective use. What we should say is, "Since you choose to say that Hitlerism and Germany is one, we have got and are going to smash both in overwhelming victory."

My last point is that we are far too loath, all parties are too hesitant to tell our own people what an Everest of sacrifice is going to be required of all of us to win this war. The alternative is defeat and the German occupation of Britain. I say frankly to my hon. Friends around me that we Tories should say to those who are generally supposed to be our supporters in politics "You will have to give up any idea of five figure incomes if you are to win the war." And equally the Labour party ought to tell its supporters that what happened in the last war is not going to repeat itself without trouble, leading possibly to defeat. There were men and women who before that war earned £2 or £3 a week in factories, who before it was over were getting £6 or £7 a week when those of us who were in the trenches—even officers, let alone other ranks—were getting less than those favoured people. That sort of thing is not going to repeat itself or there will be such a feeling on the part of the Forces as will make it impossible to carry on the war.

Above all we have to get out of people's minds something which I think the Government themselves have been rather inclined to suggest, namely, that it will be all right because we shall be ready by 1941. The Germans mean to bring this war to a decision this summer. Now is the time to treble and quadruple our effort—not in 1941. We must make our self sacrifice equal to that of France.

There are far too many people who regard this war as an interlude, thinking of what is to happen at the next election and after, and whether Mr. B or Mr. C is to be in office. That does not matter in the slightest degree. The only thing that matters is winning the war. Who is to be in power at the end of it or after does not matter. France regards the winning of the war as her main business in life, it is the only thing for which every Frenchman or Frenchwoman lives to day. We rather encourage the bishops and clergy, who do not fight in this war, to say how it should be fought and what the peace should be. In France it would be inconceivable, to clericals and non-clericals alike to suppose that those who can take no part in the war should be concerned in how it can be ended. In peace time France values individual liberty and freedom of speech more than we do. Say what you will, France in peace time, in the Chamber as elsewhere, values individual liberty and freedom of speech as much as we do, but in wartime she suppresses both. The latitude allowed to Sir Oswald Mosley and Mr. Pollitt, with their

needy, seedy crew of adventurers in this country, would soon get them behind bars if they were in France. You have to equalise your war effort to that of France, otherwise all this talk about Anglo French co operation in this committee or that, or this meeting of Cabinet meetings or inter parliamentary committees or of trade unions will get us nowhere. The French philosophy is that you have to suffer almost slavery now in order to keep your freedom after the war, for if you lose it, you will be slaves to Germany for a generation. I say that there is need for us to learn that lesson. If we do not have regard to it in this House, the issue will be taken out of our hands.

MR ARTHUR GREENWOOD (Wakefield) When the Prime Minister rose this afternoon he was greeted with cheers. [Interruption] Well, synthetic cheers. I compared them with the cheers which greeted the hon and gallant Member for North Portsmouth (Sir R. Keyes) when he told the story which he said was a shocking story of ineptitude. That is really also the story of to day's Debate. In a relatively short experience in this House, I have never known it, in spite of its cheers this afternoon, in graver mood. Its heart is troubled. It is anxious, it is more than anxious, it is apprehensive. Our primary object and, indeed, our great purpose, is the energetic prosecution of the war to a victorious end and, as the Noble Lord has said, in this mighty struggle personalities do not count. The interests of the common weal are supreme. The cause of freedom, as has been said on both sides of the House to day, must emerge from this struggle triumphant and for ever unchallengeable. I have heard in this Debate to day statements that perhaps the people do not quite understand. The people in this country fully realise the terrible consequences of defeat. They know, perhaps not in such a subtle and complicated way as hon Members of this House, but in their simple way, what is at stake. It is such liberties as they have won. It is their determination to keep such liberties as they have won in order to win the greater liberties for which they hope. They will face all the sacrifices which they may be called upon to bear, but they will not tolerate the lack of bold and effective leadership. If the people lost their faith in the nation's leaders, the situation would be serious and, indeed, grave beyond words. But the spirit of the people will not falter, they will not lose their faith, but they will part company with the leaders who fail them.

Should there be confused councils, inefficiency, and wavering, other men must be called to take their places. I ask hon Members whether it is not a fact, within their knowledge that increasing numbers of people in this country are becoming more and more disturbed with the direction of the war. Hon Members on that side know that it is true. There is not a live Member of this House who has not had evidence within the last week-end that that is so.

I would ask hon Members opposite, is it not the case that the

Norwegian episode—inadequately and if I may say so unconvincingly explained to the House by the Prime Minister—has profoundly shocked the people in every constituency in Britain? They have been misled by optimistic speeches. I have no doubt that the right hon Gentleman the First Lord to-morrow night with a debating power which I myself shall never attain will be able to explain—but is it not the fact that the Prime Minister and the First Lord have led the people to believe the impossible about this adventure which was never thought out and which was never taken to the end? Is it not the case that through lack of direction by the Government—and I am not in favour of censorship but I would like these matters straightened out—the Press led the public to believe that day by day we were winning magnificent victories when those people who looked at the map and thought about the situation knew that those things could not be? The right hon Gentleman to-day told us that south of Trondheim and north of Trondheim we had succeeded by a masterly policy in evacuation with no losses. Wars are not won on masterly evacuations. In the first major effort of this war whatever the reasons may be justifiable or not, we have had to creep back to our lairs which is against the spirit of the men who are over the waters and as the hon and gallant Member for North Portsmouth (Sir R. Keyes) said who were prepared to fight.

Members of this House know perfectly well and it is no good pretending to hide it that there is a feeling in this country against the Government. [HON MEMBERS Nonsense.] I hope I have never talked any nonsense in this war. I have spoken what I believe to be true. If there be some constituency which is perfectly satisfied with the conduct of the war I should like to know of it because my postbag does not bear that out. My daily correspondence is not from people of my own party neither is that of my right hon Friend the Leader of the Opposition. Our letter bag to-day I can say is from people who for years and years have been supporters of the predominant party in the Government and who are now expressing not merely concern but fears for the future of our country under its present direction.

Then I look at the effect of this reverse elsewhere. In Germany to-day there is a complete intellectual black-out. It may be that news seeps through here and there, but in fact German opinion is having to listen to lie after lie, blared out on the wireless about the destruction of the British and French fleets. There is a certain amount of truth but Hitler now controls Denmark and the greater part of the territory of Norway and has bases on the Norwegian coast within hours' striking distance of this country. What effect will it have on the German people a people whom if our blockade is as effective as it ought to be would be beginning to feel the terrific due to lack of the necessities of life? What effect will

their great strategic victory have in increasing and extending the time of their resistance? What, I ask, is to be the effect on the neutrals?

I believe we have lost the military initiative in this war. We have, in fact, been on the defensive since the war broke out, and we certainly have never had the diplomatic offensive since the war broke out. We have watched the enemy gradually suborning the peoples of neutral countries, all of whom, whatever their form of government, know that we are in fact fighting for them; that we are fighting, not for our particular form of government, but for their right to determine their own form of government. We have in spirit with us every small neutral nation in Europe. What is going to be the effect of this defeat, as the Prime Minister called it this afternoon, in Norway? We have not a very noble record in recent years in our treatment of neutrals. We allowed Czecho-Slovakia to go down. Poland has gone down, Denmark has gone down, and Norway is more or less submerged. When, as the Prime Minister admitted, the blow might fall swiftly on some other neutral, is that neutral going to think that we are the kind of Power to come to their assistance? We have in fact by this unfortunate series of incidents forfeited the confidence of the remaining small neutral States in Europe. Why should they believe in us? Yet, if they do not believe in us, the situation becomes more serious for us. Although the Prime Minister may say that it is not yet time to make a final assessment and that on the whole perhaps the advantage is with us, the fact is, as every hon. Member knows, that we have had a very serious reverse, not merely in the military sense, but in the hearts of the people of this country and in the hearts of the peoples of neutral countries.

The Prime Minister, towards the end of his speech, asked that there should be no bickerings. Since the war broke out I have never been guilty of bickering. I have kept my right to criticise, and it is important that we should. The right hon. Gentleman admits that, although I am bound to say that I thought he was a little hoity-toity at the Conservative conference about criticism. Criticism there must be. Criticism in this House in wartime, and in this particular war, is the one weapon that sincere people must keep in order to prevent the Government going wrong. For eight months now, in public and in private, my hon. Friends and I have done everything we could to urge on the effective prosecution of the war. The Prime Minister told us this afternoon that the chiefs of the Fighting Services have said that we are giving hostages to fortune and that we might be helping the enemy. I am prepared to face that danger. If hon. Members feel that the prosecution of the war is not effective and do not say so, they are playing into the hands of the enemy far more effectively than by creating disturbances in the House. It would be a crime if any man in this House, having the major cause at heart, withheld his criticism of the Government, however it may be composed,

because the enemy might draw some comfort from that criticism. Therefore I make no apology for my criticisms and as long as Hitler does not set foot in this country—at that time no doubt my liberty of action would be severely restricted—I intend to preserve all my rights of criticism.

There has been criticism about the Norwegian campaign. As hon. Members opposite know if they are honest with themselves that criticism is bringing to a head a lot of other criticisms. There are criticisms about supply which will have to be made in the House before very long. It is a situation with which no hon. Member whether in the War Cabinet or outside it can pretend to be satisfied. There is the situation of our exports, the situation of our shipping, our failure to get the diplomatic initiative in the Balkans and among other neutral nations. All this dissatisfaction is now coming to a head because through this Government Britain's pride has been humbled in Norway, not through the defects of the fighting men but through those who are responsible for the supreme direction of the war. The broad fact which hon. Members cannot deny if they are honest with themselves is that there is deep bitter growing dissatisfaction with the major direction of the war and that responsibility lies with the Prime Minister and his colleagues and with those supporters of the Government who in spite of their better judgment have from time to time applauded the Government's feeble efforts.

Our view is quite simple. This war must be won and won as quickly as possible. The long term programme to which the right hon. Gentleman referred this afternoon is essential but a short term programme is imperative and must be an effective one. If Hitler strikes again he will strike soon and one wonders whether our plans are ready.

The SECRETARY OF STATE FOR WAR (MR. OLIVER STANLEY). I want to begin with some of the criticisms which have been made of the Government's action and then to end by saying something to the critics. All of us of course speak here tonight with a due realisation of the gravity of the position. It would be absurd to exaggerate the worst that our Army has suffered in the last few weeks. It is I think, ridiculous to describe it as it was described by one hon. Member as a disaster while at the same time it is equally dangerous to minimise it or to pretend that although the losses in men and material may have been small the losses in other matters, in matters of prestige and morale may not have been great. I think it is true that the shock which that has been to the country was aggravated by the fact that people were led to believe by stories in the Press and on the radio which had no official foundation that successes were being obtained and as the right hon. Gentleman said if a man in his senses had looked at the map might have known could not possibly be true.

The criticism of the action of the Government for this Norwegian campaign starts concerning a time some weeks before the actual

invasion of Norway. The first criticism is directed against the break-up, as it is called, of the Finnish expeditionary force. It is true that in the middle of March a number of troops, French and British had been, some collecting and some earmarked, in order to form a force which could go to Finland and which could also offer protection to Sweden if, as a result, she were attacked. A large number simply stayed when the chance of the Finnish expedition came to an end where they had been earmarked to take their turn in embarkation. Others, it is true who were then in this country, were moved to France. I would ask hon. Members to realise that Norway was not the only place in which during the last few weeks or months danger has threatened, and that troops in France, while almost equally convenient for the purpose of sending to Norway in case of necessity would have been more valuable there than if they had been in England and in attack had taken place on the Western front.

Miss WILKINSON (Jarrow). But your communiqués say that nothing is happening there.

MR. STANLEY. We are being asked as we were in a most powerful speech from my Noble Friend to face realities, and do people think that, just because for some months on the Western Front there has been no fighting there has been no threat, while at any moment the greatest storm the world has ever seen may burst, a storm that would be absolutely decisive? That is not facing realities. One cause of delay did result from the breaking up of that force and that was the dispersal of the shipping, but the retention of that large mass of shipping the immediate purpose of which had disappeared, would in itself have had a considerable effect upon our war effort. One other point was made by the Leader of the Opposition. He asked about the dispersal of the skiing detachment. The skiing battalion consisted of some 600 individuals. It was not a number which could have made a decisive contribution in this war in Norway, but out of this 600, over 400 were trained officers in the Army serving as privates in this battalion, and it was obviously impossible to retain for very long in that capacity the services of people who were urgently required as leaders and instructors in the battalions to which they had been previously appointed.

MR. ATTLEE. My point was that the Government, having all these men assembled and ready within a very short time of taking a decision which might lead to the need for employing them and their equipment, dispersed them straight away and then came to a decision to take a risk for which they were needed.

MR. STANLEY. I am coming to the next criticism, which I think will meet that point. It was made most forcibly by my right hon. Friend the Member for Sparkbrook (Mr. Amery) . .

His criticism is that we failed to anticipate the move which the Germans did then make, and that we therefore failed to make adequate plans in advance and that the action which we had take when the blow in Norway had fallen was improvised. It is perfectly true as the Prime Minister said that we had had reports for some time of ships being held in readiness, and of the practising of the embarking and disembarking of troops. It was quite clear that there was a possibility, indeed more than a possibility of a German descent upon Norway, but I will admit quite frankly that in the minds of all of us the probability, indeed almost certainty, was that the descent would be upon the southern and not upon the western ports of Norway. If hon Members are not being wise after the event, but trying to think as if the events had never happened, will they not agree that that was indeed the probability? After all, we must remember that those big western Norwegian ports Trondheim, Bergen and, to a lesser extent, Narvik, are situated at the head of narrow, tortuous fiords, and that these fiords certainly in the case of Trondheim and Bergen were protected by batteries of heavy guns. Although it is true that the guns were not modern, yet they were of a heavy type and quite capable of inflicting very severe damage on anything except a capital ship. The combination of the approach, the batteries and any minelaying operations which naturally Norway might have been expected to undertake meant that the entry to those ports could not be forced, against opposition without a delay of at least some hours. During that time, the attacking naval Forces would be exposed to the risk of the British Navy immediately in their rear. So hazardous would have been the attempt that, on purely military grounds I do not believe, in those circumstances, that it would have been undertaken by the Germans.

CAPTAIN BELLENGER. They did undertake it.

MR STANLEY. I said "on purely military grounds."

CAPTAIN BELLENGER. They had other grounds besides military grounds.

MR STANLEY. I mean that I do not believe anyone would have undertaken that operation believing there was any possibility of those ports being defended, or of themselves being delayed, or that there was any chance that, while the Forces were taking the forts in front, the British Navy would be coming up in the rear. The best proof is this. I do not know whether hon Members have quite realised the composition of the German naval Forces which undertook the attack on the batteries, which mounted guns of at least 8 inch calibre. To the best of my knowledge, occupation of Bergen was carried out by two light cruisers, and that of Trondheim by two destroyers, although a heavy cruiser arrived later. It is clear that those Forces would have been quite unable to force them had these been in action. You have

only to see what happened at Oslo, where one battery and one ship escaped, for some reason, the treacherous order which had been sent to the others, to appreciate what delay and what damage could have been caused

MR GLENVILL HALL (Colne Valley) : It is not Norway on trial to-day, but the Government

MR STANLEY : If you are to blame the Government, at least consider the circumstances under which they were asked to help. Ask yourselves whether anybody in this House expected that Norway or some part of the Norwegian people would have been so affected by German propaganda that no resistance would have been forthcoming. We have been asked, "Why was our Intelligence not able to tell us exactly what the plans of the Germans were, or exactly what the situation was in Norway?" It is not as easy for us to get information in Germany about such plans as it sometimes is to get information here but I put it to hon. Gentlemen. Are we to expect our Intelligence to have information of this state of affairs in Norway? The Norwegian Government were in far the best position to know, but they were taken by surprise just as much as, or more than, we were.

On the morning of 9th April we were faced with this situation, that, before Norway had even asked for our help, every aerodrome and arsenal had already surrendered, and that our task was not to help Norway to resist but to reconquer the country. That is the plan which the Government undertook. They could have said that, in the circumstances, any attempt to help Norway or to reconquer the country was impossible.

We were not blind to the difficulties of landing places, or to the fact that no aerodromes were available to us, and it would have been easy to represent those difficulties as insuperable. But I wonder if we should have gained by it? Politically it is said that because of our lack of success in Norway we have lost prestige throughout the world, but we should have lost as much, or more, prestige if we had never even tried. Militarily, it may be quite true that in Central Norway we have not succeeded and we had to withdraw, but at any rate we have made the Germans pay a price. An occupation which they expected would be completed in a day or two has taken them some weeks. It has resulted in severe loss and great strain upon them. Do not let us forget that in Norway the fight still goes on. Would the fight still be going on in Norway if we had not gone to her aid?

the difficulty of landing troops and making any successful attack unless we could be certain, if not of superiority, at any rate of some kind of equality in the air. But hon Members will realise that it was quite impossible to ascertain whether there was any chance of getting any defence in the air, of establishing aerodromes or of getting any protection for our troops until we got to Norway and until we got our troops in. As was said by the right hon Gentleman the Member for Sparkbrook, there were only open to us two places of strategic importance in Norway. They were Trondheim and Narvik. The right hon Gentleman was rather contemptuous of Narvik, but he must not forget that that too, is a channel to Sweden, and although it is true that Trondheim is a channel to the South of Norway, one of the most important matters, of course, was to restore communications, if possible, with Sweden.

During the first few hours there was, of course, little reliable information as to the exact situation in the various ports either as to the numbers of Germans who had landed in a particular place, or as to the presence of any Norwegian forces in the neighbourhood. It was decided, therefore, immediately to send troops to Narvik where an action by the Fleet was expected, and meanwhile to prepare others, both French and British, who could undertake as well an expedition to Trondheim. Hon Members will realise that it was necessary to reconnoitre the neighbourhood of Trondheim in order to ascertain whether there were in fact ports where it was possible with any hope of success to land a force of the sort of magnitude which would be necessary for this operation. The only known ports of course, had already been taken. As a result of these reconnaissances, we did discover Namsos and Andalsnes.

I hope hon Members will have a true appreciation of what nature these ports were. They were small, almost fishing ports, with no real facilities whatsoever for the unloading of heavy materials. At Namsos there was no crane at all, while at Andalsnes there was one crane.

CAPTAIN BELLENGER When did you find out that there was only one crane there?

MR STANLEY When we reconnoitred. We had to take our chance of putting our troops through these ports, because, unless we took them, there would be no gates left open.

CAPTAIN ANSTRUTHER GRAY (Lanark, Northern) Surely the War Office had taken some steps to reconnoitre the possibilities of that country, where we were very liable to be engaged at any moment?

MR STANLEY Before you land forces at a port, you want trained officers to survey its possibilities, and to see whether, in

act, it is possible, through that port, to maintain the forces that you are going to land

SIR JOSEPH NALL (Manchester, Hulme): Does my right hon Friend realise that there were neither quays, cranes, nor piers at Gallipoli, yet that division after division landed there and fought?

MR STANLEY: There is a very great difference. In the first place, we had a perfectly safe base on an island with a few miles of Gallipoli; in the second place, there was no air attack there; and in the third place the Turks were never able to bring up the sort and weight of armoured fighting vehicle and big guns which it was possible for the Germans to bring up. My right hon Friend the First Lord will deal to-morrow with the question of the possibility of an immediate stroke against Trondheim, which has been suggested. There is only one point that I want to make now. If any impression was given that the decision to which the Prime Minister referred was taken after differences of opinion, either between Members of the Cabinet or between the Cabinet and the General Staff, that impression is entirely erroneous. The decision was taken by the Cabinet as a whole, and was based on the unanimous advice tendered by those responsible for such advice.

I want to turn to one further criticism which has been directed against the land operations—that is, the use of Territorials in some of the operations. I am sure hon Members will reject, and indeed resent, the sort of idea that we have only to say the word "Territorial" to mean a soldier whom it is unfair and unsafe to put in the face of the enemy. There is perfectly justifiable criticism which I have to meet as to whether these particular troops should have been engaged in the particular operations in which they were engaged—but what I think we must all reject is the idea, conveyed in some of the statements one sees, that the Territorial is not fit to meet and to fight the Germans. Of course, no one pretends that at this period of the war, however brave and however useful a soldier he may be, the Territorial will be as well trained as some of the men in the Regular units, who have spent many more years in the Service, although the longer the war lasts the less will be the gap between the two.

COLONEL BALDWIN-WEBB (The Wrekin): Is my hon Friend aware that the Territorials that were sent to Norway had been formed from a division previously disbanded, and only recently re-formed?

MR STANLEY: I do not know what my hon and gallant Friend means. These particular battalions which were sent to Norway had in fact been earmarked some time ago to perform a role in the Finnish expedition; as the Prime Minister explained a static role—the occupation of a port. But because of that they

had been brought up to strength and had been given all their equipment. In some way therefore they had been more favoured than most Territorial units in the way of opportunities for training and equipment. It is true that if it had been intended to use these troops for the most active and mobile operations it would have been preferable to have had regular soldiers. But the intention was that these troops should man these ports as quickly as possible and that they should secure against possible German raids or German parachutes both the ports and the internal communications and therefore there should be based in the one case at Namsos French regular troops and in the other case at Andalsnes British regular forces, who would form the spearhead of the attack.

With regard to equipment, I have already said in answer to a question that the units went out with full scale unit equipment. The delay which occurred was not in the equipment of the unit, but the possibility of providing the heavy equipment the tanks and the heavy anti aircraft guns. Hon Members will realise that, when dealing with a force of this nature it was not a question, if you had got the supplies only of being able to get them to the ports. When you were able to work for only a few hours in daylight and a ship which had to go several hundred miles was an hour or so late it was a question of not being able to unload. The ship had to put out to sea again for 24 hours before it could unload the rest of its cargo.

I only want to say with regard to the Territorial troops at Andalsnes that their role was the occupation of the area of the Dombaas junction which had been attacked by German parachutists and which was obviously an extremely vital place, if we were to make an attack on Trondheim from the South. On their arrival they were met by an urgent appeal from the Norwegian Commander in Chief who said that unless those two battalions went to his assistance his army would give in. It was a terrible decision for the Commander on the spot to take—whether he should rush these troops over long communications lightly armed as they had to be, to the assistance of the Norwegians. But no one can doubt that the decision he took was in fact right. It would have been quite impossible to have left in the lurch the Norwegian Army on the ground of difficulty of communication or lack of heavy equipment. I only want to pay tribute to the gallantry of these two Territorial battalions when they arrived on the Norwegian front. By that time the Norwegians had been thoroughly tired and exhausted after 14 days fighting and in fact these two Territorial battalions were left almost entirely alone with their flanks almost unprotected to stand against the German advance. They fought with the greatest gallantry and extracted themselves in a most difficult situation. They were joined in a short time by a Regular Brigade who on their arrival administered to the German advance a severe check, which caused them great loss. Several tanks were destroyed and as a result of that this brigade

was able to effect their withdrawal with complete regularity, from prepared position to prepared position

There is no doubt that had it not been for the German air offensive it would have been quite possible for those troops, reinforced and with adequate guns to have maintained their position for any length of time. But it all depended on the possibility of providing adequate air support. Despite most gallant efforts by the Fleet Air Arm and the Royal Air Force it was found quite impossible to do it. It is not an easy job to give orders for evacuation. Orders have to be given by people in authority and no one is prepared to give those orders if they think there is any chance of an operation succeeding for military purpose to be gained by sacrifice. But there is no excuse for ordering the sacrifice of men's lives if there is no military object to be gained by it and it is quite clear that no success can be attained. The House I think generally agrees that the chance of success had disappeared when evacuation was ordered and was successfully carried out.

Many suggestions have been made with regard to the result of the reverse which we have undoubtedly suffered in Norway. One of the suggestions for remedying that situation has been a change in personnel. I do not think there is any hon. Member whatever position he occupies who cares twopence whether he holds that position or not so long as we achieve victory.

The other suggestion has been a method of machinery, the idea that a small war Cabinet would give a direction to the war which it has not got now. That, of course is purely a matter of argument. I wonder whether a small Cabinet would do what some of its exponents would have us believe. When I hear of a small Cabinet of people divested of Departmental responsibility, of thinkers who are there only to plan I have the picture of a small room in which these people solemnly sit and discuss. I understand that in a small war Cabinet in the last war under the right hon. Member for Carnarvon Boroughs (Mr. Lloyd George) there was very often standing room only. There were never fewer than 20, and sometimes as many as 30, attending the deliberations of the war Cabinet.

Have we all faced up to the responsibilities and urged on people the sacrifices, however unpleasant, which we think they will have to make if this war is to be won? I can only echo the appeal of the Noble Lord the Member for Horsham (Earl Winterton) who I think did a great service to the House and to all of us in asking that the whole country should face up to the difficulties of the situation and that all of us, not only the Government but all who in any way are the leaders of any section of opinion should be prepared to urge upon people the responsibilities which they do bear. I do not for one moment despair of ultimate success. I am quite certain that we shall attain it but I have no doubt before we attain it we shall all of us each in his own way make an immensity of sacrifices. We shall all have

bitter loss and go through great dangers, and it is only if we are prepared to make those sacrifices and to meet those dangers that we shall in the end attain victory.

SIR ARNOLD WILSON (Hitchin): . . . Let us not imagine that the setback which we have had in Norway need be permanent or that it is in any way final, even in that country. The men with whom I work have flown up and down the Valley of the Shadow of Death again and again, and they will go on doing so until victory crowns their efforts or until that Valley claims them is the spirit which inspires the Army and Navy to-day. This Debate, as a whole, is a very imperfect reflection of that determination of the people and the Armed Forces of the Crown to prosecute this war to a successful conclusion. They are not prepared to compromise or to stay their hand until victory is ours. We are prepared to go farther and much farther, and if I had any criticism to offer of the Cabinet as it stands, it is that its members have not always been ready to demand still more of us than they have demanded hitherto. . . .

We shall have to reach a lower standard of comfort, though it need not mean a lower standard of living. We shall have to modify our legislation much more rapidly. The Departments made great play before the war with the "War Book" in which was recorded all they proposed to do in the event of war. Yet we have scarcely begun to modify our peace-time legislation to meet current requirements.

There is far too much red tape, there are far too many forms of procedure suited to peace-time which have not been altered perhaps because the Civil Service as a whole has been too busy to change and simplify the law. There is much to be done in that direction. I take two points to illustrate my meaning. The Chancellor of the Exchequer has been urging us to reduce our consumption of goods but the Treasury had refused to make any modification in the system under which Post Office booklets are filled with advertisements on fraudulent patent medicines because he gets £1,000 for it. The Royal Air Force is expanding more and more rapidly; but we often find the mere difficulties of local administration of local authorities slows down the processes of administration quite unnecessarily. Local government needs to be brought into line with the national war effort. . . .

The country will stand any sacrifice necessary to victory. The people of this country are far stronger than many of the trade union resolutions would lead us to believe. The trade unions, by six to five, rejected the proposition for an early peace, but if one went into the workshops, it would be 6,000 to five against peace. Whatever may come in the future, the people of this country are united. We ask for more machines, more guns and better guns, and we are getting them.

There are always the gloomy prophets among us. We were familiar with them in the last war. . . . My party allegiance has

always rested lightly upon my shoulders. The reason I have come to night to say what I have to say is solely that there is no question of party ties whatever. We are all united in one single object—the effective prosecution of the war. It is a poor policy at the best of times unduly to advertise one's troubles. It is a much worse policy to change crews at a moment such as this.

Those who have seen active service know well that the problems of war are always a gamble with rain, a gamble with cold, a gamble with fog and mud and dirt and squalor, and those of us who are in the midst of it to day wish for one thing only—more opportunities of reaching conclusions with the enemy, and that we will do. But we require patience. Soldiers require more patience than anybody, and politicians, Members of Parliament and journalists must exercise the same virtue of patience. There is nothing more disagreeable to a crew which has been waiting for hours and hours on the off-chance to get away than to be told at the last moment that there is no hope, that there is deep fog, and then they read in the papers next day of the inactivity of the Royal Air Force. They cannot explain. There are a thousand things that cannot be explained on the Floor of the House.

8th May, 1940

MR HERBERT MORRISON (Hackney, South) I have the honour to open the second day of what must be an exceptionally grave and important Debate, and I am sure that every Member of the House who listened to the Debate yesterday was impressed with the gravity of the issues which we are now debating. If the Opposition feel that they must be sternly critical in this Debate about the handling of events and of policies if we feel that in the course of these criticisms we must refer to persons and indicate what we think of their capacity or otherwise for the conduct of the war, I ask the House to believe, and I hope I am not deceiving myself when I say, that I think that none of us are actuated by narrow partisan or personal considerations, on either side of the House. I think we all realise that these issues and the outcome of this war are far too serious a matter, and for myself I will sing the praises of anybody who is instrumental in the winning of this war, because the issues for the future of humanity are so vital. I hope the Prime Minister will believe me that if he were the man who played the great part in the winning of the war, I would sing his praises as I would those of anybody else. But the more the Debate proceeds, the more it is clear, in my view, that Ministers are open to considerable censure for their conduct of affairs.

I listened, as we all did, with attention to the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State for War yesterday, and I am bound to say that the Prime Minister presented a somewhat new figure in the House of Commons as compared with other speeches of his and that perhaps was the more noticeable when the Press had given us an indication that the Prime Minister would be jaunty and would even be aggressive at the expense of his opponents.

This was not a confident Prime Minister. It seemed to me that the Prime Minister was himself conscious of shortcomings on the part of the Government and very uncertain of the case which he was presenting to the House of Commons, and if that was true of him, it was equally true of the Secretary of State for War. He also failed to present the picture of a Minister who was confident about his business and about his case. We have to hear other Ministers to day—the Secretary of State for Air, who, I understand, will follow me, and, at the end of the Debate, the First Lord of the Admiralty. Perhaps it is right that I should say that we did make a request, through the usual channels, that the First Lord should be heard earlier in the Debate. We took the view that the First Lord was the Prime Minister's principal witness, and in those circumstances it seemed to us right that the First Lord, who has if not the entire responsibility, at least considerable responsibility, for these operations, should be heard early on, in order that the House might have as many as possible of the facts from the point of view of those who were mainly concerned with the conduct of those operations. But the right hon. Gentleman has been reserved to be the last speaker in the Debate, when there can be no comments upon his evidence, and it will thus be perhaps that the Government's principal witness, after the Prime Minister, has been deliberately kept out of the box, that he is the chief witness who refuses to go into the box, like the proprietor of a certain Communist newspaper in a recent legal case.

There has been, in addition to the speeches to which we have already listened, a number of declarations about the Norwegian expedition, most of them after the report which the Prime Minister gave to the House last week, and having regard to the proceedings yesterday and the impression that they made upon our minds, perhaps it is relevant to quote the Chancellor of the Exchequer in a speech which was reported in *The Times* of last Saturday. He said

“ I am confident that when the whole situation is laid before the impartial public, its judgment will be that the action decided on was wisely taken on the best advice ”

I do not think it can be said that in the light of yesterday's Debate the operations in Norway answer that description. The right hon. Gentleman the Secretary of State for Air, in a broadcast, gave an even brighter picture—I believe before the Prime Minister's statement, I think it was last Saturday week—of the operations in Norway, and in the *Listener* of 6th May he is reported as having said.

To-day our wings are spread over the Arctic. They are sheathed in ice. To-morrow the sun of victory will touch them with its golden light ”—

Hon. Members laugh, but I am not quoting this for the purpose of arousing amusement, because it really is serious, though it is

an indication of the delusions from which the Government are suffering. He went on

"and the wings that flashed over the great waters of the North will bear us homewards once more to the 'peace with honour' of a free people and the victory of a noble race

In addition, there have been other comments on it, and I am bound to say that I was a little surprised to notice in leading articles in *The Times* and *Daily Telegraph* the very great gratification which was expressed at the fact that the Prime Minister himself had at least one supporter and one friend in the Press of the world outside our own country and the British Commonwealth of Nations. This was an organ of the Spanish Falangists, an organ of General Franco's, and that organ said that the statement of the right hon. Gentleman the Prime Minister

did honour to the traditional nobility with which the illustrious name of Chamberlain is so linked with the life of the British Empire."

HON. MEMBERS. Hear, hear

MR. MORRISON. I am not surprised that hon. Members should agree with that. It is quite appropriate that it should be acceptable to the other side, but I will say that, in the midst of a highly critical world, I feel a little humiliated that *The Times* and the *Daily Telegraph* should go out of their way to be so grateful for the fact that we at least have had a compliment to the Prime Minister from one of the newspapers which are the organs of General Franco and his movement in Spain. In addition, there have been statements in the American Press and one statement is from the *New York Herald Tribune*, which has been, I think, fairly consistently a friend of the Allied cause. One of the troubles about this business is not only the military damage that it has done, not only the dangers to our future strategically, not only the serious economic damage it will have done to our country, directly and indirectly, but one of the most terrible things is the blow it has been to us in the eyes of the neutral world and the fact that our prestige has been so badly let down. The *New York Herald Tribune* says that the British were out-manœuvred and got there too late,

"just as Mr. Chamberlain has been consistently out-manœuvred, and has arrived too late on so many occasions

Finally, there is to day on the tape a very significant statement of one of the best known Australian newspapers, the *Sydney Sun*, which, in an editorial on yesterday's Debate, says

"What has been revealed is so shocking in its implications of deficient preparations for an emergency that Mr. Chamberlain's complicity evokes the gravest doubts throughout the Empire Government's capacity to put the necessary drive into the

That is a reflection of Australian opinion that none

ignore and I am afraid that it is fairly expressive of general external feeling on the situation with which we are faced. Reference has been made to the fact that after the war of the Soviet Union against Finland after the provisional efforts which were made by His Majesty's Government in association with the French Republic to send aid to the Finnish Republic the Prime Minister warned Scandinavia at that time of the danger that stood upon their doorsteps. It was therefore known by the Prime Minister that immediate danger did confront Scandinavia and indeed it was obvious in the circumstances with which those countries were faced and I think the Prime Minister, in drawing attention to this danger rather urged upon the Scandinavian States that they should associate themselves together and associate with us. Perfectly sound advice. Whether the Prime Minister is the right man to give it, in view of his past conduct of the foreign policy of this country I do not know, but we all agree that at that moment Scandinavia did stand in very great danger.

But despite that danger it is now established that the forces which were ready presumably for embarkation to Finland had permission been given by the Scandinavian States and a request made by Finland were in the main scattered and that the transport accommodation for them similarly scattered. That does seem to me to be an amazing action for the Government to have taken especially when they themselves contemplated certain activities in relation to Norway. It seems to me that forces properly equipped and prepared ought to have been ready for action at any moment, and that a policy of preparation and readiness would have been well worth while. I noticed that the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State for War yesterday stressed the point that "We could not let Norway down we had to go there and do something about it." That is not challenged in any part of the House. We all agree that something had to be done but the more I hear "We had to go there and do something about it" I begin to wonder whether the Government instead of taking this business seriously as an essential part of our war policy, were merely discharging what they considered to be a moral obligation in order to protect themselves from possible criticisms on moral grounds. I ask in all seriousness was this a serious and properly organised expedition or a demonstration for the purpose of satisfying the moral conscience of some or all the members of the Government and of the outside world?

The Prime Minister has stressed quite rightly, and we all agree with him the brilliant success of the evacuation operations but quite frankly, having regard to the interests of this country and the world I would sooner be able to boast of the success of landing operations than the success of evacuation operations, brilliantly as they were conducted. When war is being conducted and particularly a war of this kind against such an enemy, whose methods and tactics and whose little as well as big tricks we really ought to be familiar with now—we have had a long experience of

Herr Hitler in peace and we have had now a number of months' experience of Herr Hitler in war—I really begin to wonder how much experience of him we are to have, how near we are to get to disaster before Ministers will try to understand the psychology of this man. It is part of the war operations that we should understand his psychology and estimate his possible actions. The Government ought to have considered—it was their duty—the antecedents of the events which have occurred in Norway, instead of improvising expedients mostly after the event has actually occurred.

It seems to me that there must have been a weakness in British diplomacy, at any rate before the war started in Norway, in the Scandinavian countries. I am very doubtful whether the Foreign Office has the right standards and instincts in selecting diplomatists for service abroad. Diplomacy under modern conditions is a totally different job. It is not enough to have nice gentlemen with cultured manners and who are good mixers with the other classes in the country. It is vital that we should have men who understand everything that is going on in the countries to which they are accredited, men who know the views of the social classes and the political and economic movements, men who are alive and in touch with all these things if they are to be effective representatives of this country able to gather information and the capacity to interpret that information to the Foreign Office. I cannot believe that the attitude of the Scandinavian countries towards this country would have been so unsatisfactory as it has been if our diplomatic job had been done well in those countries years before. After all, these are democratic countries and nearer to the Anglo Saxon democracy than any other countries in the world, and it ought to have been quite natural for them to have been friendly with us.

Secondly, I really want to know if we can be told—I appreciate that I may ask some questions which Ministers may think they cannot properly answer—what was the state of our Intelligence Service in Norway? How is it that this came upon us like a bolt from the blue? All these numbers of artificial German population, including disguised military forces and a certain number of Quislings, did not we know anything about it? Did not our Intelligence Service tell us? It is not a very difficult matter to find out? It is not a very intricate problem for the Secret Service to have discovered what was happening. If the Secret Service have not told the Government what was happening then the Secret Service wants overhauling and some of the people at the top want to be changed. But if it be the case that the Intelligence Service did report and that Ministers did not act on the information they received then Ministers themselves are directly concerned in a grave failure to take account of the Intelligence so conveyed. In any case they are responsible because they are responsible for the Intelligence Service as the political heads of Departments. But can we be told when the Government were informed that the

Germans were in the first place intending to move against Norway and secondly when they actually did move against Norway and not only against Norway but against Copenhagen, as well? Can we be told when the first message came through of the movement of German transports and ships and how soon it was before the Government moved?

There are allegations that one of the causes of the weakness of our Intelligence Service is the small amount of money spent upon it. I am a believer in economy in public expenditure as much as anybody in the House but any false economy in our Intelligence Service in the circumstances of this war really would be criminal economy. Here is a letter by a gentleman E. W. D. Tennant in the *Daily Telegraph* about our Intelligence Service and in relation to the expenditure on such services abroad.

It is however inconceivable that such a vast plot organised for months past not only in Germany but also from inside Norway could have been kept secret had our Legation at Oslo been sufficiently staffed and adequately supplied with funds to maintain the necessary contacts with Norwegians of every type.

That seems to me to be a reasonable proposition. The writer goes on to say

It is well known that our Legations in many other European countries are faced with the same difficulties which are I understand entirely due to the policy of the Treasury and not to that of the Foreign Office. No one disputes the urgent need for the utmost economy but it can be carried too far and can become not only expensive but dangerous. These outposts of Britain in foreign countries should, as long as the war lasts be put into a position to compete with and counter the strenuous efforts being made by Germany but they can only do this if supplied with adequate funds and large enough staffs."

Apart from the Intelligence Service and the positive information and news which may have been sent through the Intelligence Service, we really ought to have known enough of the ways and habits and the probable intentions of Herr Hitler for the Government to have anticipated that this attack on Norway would come at some time and quite probably at an early time. Moreover when the decision to lay mines in Norwegian territorial waters was reached I should like to ask whether anybody in the Government contemplated that there would be possible counter-action on the part of the German Government and did anybody think what that possible counter-action might be? Or did the Government go on laying mines and say, "We have no reason to think that anything of a counter action will take place on the part of the German Government." I do not want the House to think that I disagree with the laying of the mines. I was in favour of action being taken in Norwegian territorial waters well before I wanted such action taken but I want to know whether when the action was taken, the Government ever thought or speculated upon possible reprisals on the part of the enemy and

took steps to meet those possible reprisals? Then, why did we let it be known that something was moving in regard to Norwegian territorial waters? I know that the Prime Minister, in answering my hon. Friend the Member of Bishop Auckland (Mr. Dalton), who made the suggestion that something should be done about the territorial waters, was shocked in his moral views that we should contemplate interfering with neutral rights. One of these days we shall really understand that we are fighting an enemy who does not bother about neutral rights at all.

MR. McGOVERN (Glasgow, Shettleston). What would you have done?

MR. MORRISON. I will tell the hon. Member. I should have walked in. I do not think interruptions by the hon. Member will help this Debate or its conduct.

MR. McGOVERN. Go on, conscientious objector.

MR. MORRISON. I cordially agree with the action, but I do say that it would have been desirable for Ministers to have contemplated the consequences of what they did. Why did we let it be known that something was moving in this direction? I appreciate the Prime Minister's view that he did not like the idea and had moral scruples about touching Norwegian territorial waters. It may be that he was preparing British public opinion for a change of policy, and, indeed, English newspapers for days before had been preparing the public by hints that a change in British policy was coming. Of all the foolish things that could have been done, that was the most foolish. To tell Herr Hitler almost what they were going to do before they did it was profoundly unwise. Obviously, if the Government were going to change their policy in relation to Norwegian territorial waters, the wisest thing would have been to do it and tell the world about it afterwards.

face us. Surely we ought to have done this work of survey antecedent to military operations not only in relation to Norway but we ought to have done it—if we have not, I hope we shall proceed to do it immediately—in relation to every other country or point at which we may be engaged in conflict with the enemy. Clearly this should have been done months ago, it should have been done as part of the staff work before ever war broke out in order that we might be ready. In view of the situation in the Balkans, the possible situation at Gibraltar, in Italy, and so on, these surveys ought to have been completed and we ought to know in broad detail what kind of problems will face us and how we shall move subject always to the actions of the enemy.

I come now to the active operations. I join with my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition and the Prime Minister in paying a tribute to the bravery and capacity of the troops, airmen and sailors but I should like to ask the right hon. Gentleman the First Lord of the Admiralty whether there was an advance of the Fleet earlier than the one we know about and a return from the high seas because at that time the enemy was not discovered although very soon afterwards it was known that the enemy was engaged in active operations.

THE FIRST LORD OF THE ADMIRALTY (MR CHURCHILL) I do not quite understand

MR MORRISON I am asking whether it is the case that the Fleet, because of a belief that the enemy was moving to sea, did not discover the enemy, and returned and then had to go again. Secondly, I should like to know what were the strategic reasons that led us first to Narvik. I appreciate the importance of the iron ore, and I shall not say anything scornful about it, because it is of vital importance both to us and the enemy, and it was legitimate and proper that we should try to stop the enemy's supplies of iron ore. But was Narvik strategically the right place to aim at first? Would it not have been wiser strategically to start at a more Southern point? If we had first landed at Trondheim in a more Southerly direction, surely we should have been in a better position to deal with Narvik. Better still it would have been a good thing to have dealt with both. I rather looks as though we started at Narvik and then a material period afterwards began to move South and it tended to be late. I should like to know what is the view of the Government on this matter. With regard to German communications with Norway, the attacks on the aerodromes from which the German planes came took place in due course but there seems to have been slowness before those attacks took place and it looks as though there were materially delayed landings with doubtful planning on the part of the authorities concerned.

I want now to refer to Trondheim. All hon. Members listened with sympathy and interest to the speech of the hon. and gallant

Member for North Portsmouth (Sir R. Keyes) yesterday. We listened with some little emotion because we could tell what was passing through the minds of the hon and gallant Gentleman and the right hon Gentleman the First Lord of the Admiralty, and we were sympathetic. I think there was no hon Member who listened to that speech who was not profoundly impressed, and it is a speech which leaves the First Lord with some very important points to answer when he speaks. In relation to the proposed considered Naval attack upon Trondheim, I should like to put some questions to the First Lord of the Admiralty. Can we be told whether the men on the spot in charge of the Fleet at that point wanted to go in and attack? Was that their desire? If so, my second question is whether they were stopped by Whitehall from so attacking. It is profoundly important that that question should be answered, because Trondheim is of great importance. Our bombers did very well in that part of Norway, but the fact that we had no aerodromes in Norway has been repeatedly impressed upon us. I gather there is an aerodrome thereabouts which, if we could have got it, would have made all the difference to the operations of our fighters, against the enemy. It was of vital importance that we should get that aerodrome, and I rather gathered from the speech of the hon and gallant Member for North Portsmouth that we should have got it had we gone in. As to the Narvik sector, it was recently stated in the *Daily Telegraph* that the Germans already have an aerodrome there for fighters. I should like to know whether it is true that the Germans have there such an aerodrome which they are using or can use for their fighters. If so, why did we not capture it, or why do we not capture it, and use it?

I come now to a series of questions which I should like to put to the Ministers concerned, and most of which, I think, can properly be put to the First Lord of the Admiralty. Was there a plan in operation for unity of command between the various forces in Norway, at any rate as soon as it was practicable to engage in operations? Is it the case that A.A. guns were sent without predictors, and that they were sent a week late? Is it the case that other guns were sent without ammunition? Is it the case that machine-guns were sent without spare barrels? Was there any proper liaison between the port occupied by us at Namsos and the port occupied by us at Andalsnes, were there proper communications between these two points? Is it a fact that the military force was not supplied with snow shoes, the consequence being that the troops were stuck on the roads and were bombed there? Is it a fact that Territorial Brigades were sent—I join with everybody else in paying a tribute to their courage and capacity, for they fought with all courage—which were second Territorial Army units that had never had even brigade training? Finally, I venture to intimate that, in the light of the replies to these questions, we must reserve the right to ask for some form of inquiry into these operations with a view

to ascertaining who was responsible for the difficulties. If the politicians were responsible they must take the judgment of the country and the House and if high officers were responsible of course Ministers are responsible for the conduct of those high officers. I wish only to say in passing that it is the duty of Ministers to answer for high officers but it is no less their duty if they are satisfied that there have been mistakes by high officers, to consider replacing them by others.

Towards the close of his speech the Prime Minister indicated the act on which the Government had taken and informed us that the First Lord of the Admiralty is to be appointed as a sort of director, inspirer and giver of instructions where necessary to the Chiefs of Staff Committee. The House and the country have a great deal of confidence in the First Lord of the Admiralty but I wonder whether it is quite fair to the right hon. Gentleman that, in addition to his heavy labours at the Admiralty he should have this task of being concerned with the general strategy and high policy of presumably all the Armed Forces of the Crown. Is it physically possible for him to do this? Can he do it only at the expense of his own physical and mental efficiency in due course? Of all the dangers to be found in Government in time of war perhaps there are two that are most important—one is bad Ministers and the other is tired Ministers. Even when a good Minister becomes tired he may without wishing or knowing it, become a danger. Is it fair to the heads of the other Service Departments that the head of one Service should so to speak, supervise the others? Finally is it the case that the right hon. Gentleman the First Lord of the Admiralty is being used as a sort of shield by the Prime Minister when he finds it convenient to do so? I am quite aware that the Prime Minister has great confidence in the First Lord. I have been pleased to notice that during recent months. But it appears to me that when the Government are in trouble when they are open to criticism on grounds of incompetence they tend to bring the First Lord into the shop window in the belief that that will satisfy public criticism. That is not altogether fair. It tends to place on the First Lord responsibilities which he cannot possibly carry and which it is doubtful whether in fact the Government will allow him to carry.

The Prime Minister said that he has an open mind about the machinery of Government and that he is willing to make changes if he is convinced they are desirable. He said however that it is the war effort that really matters and not the machinery of Government—that it is materials supplies and so on that matter. But if the machinery of Government is wrong it will impede the war effort. While machinery, as machinery is not conclusive and while we must not get a machinery complex nevertheless the existence of machinery that is efficient rapid and smooth running is a matter of vital importance in the prosecution of the war. I suggest that the speeches of the Prime Minister and the Secretary

of State for War are not good enough. This is not the first mistake that has occurred in the prosecution of the war. We have had troubles about Finland, we have had troubles about Norway. There are too many troubles, and in particular, there are too many "too lates" in the prosecution of this war. There is trouble in connection with supply. There is a lack of material and of component parts for the factories to use. I have actually heard of a factory for aeroplane manufacture which has been empty since the beginning of September because the machinery is not available. There is backwardness in the organisation of labour. I am still doubtful whether Anglo French economic co operation is adequate to the needs of the prosecution of the war.

The fact is that before the war and during the war we have felt that the whole spirit, tempo and temperament of at least some Ministers have been wrong, inadequate and unsuitable. I am bound to refer, in particular to the Prime Minister, the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Secretary of State for Air. I cannot forget that in relation to the conduct of British foreign policy between 1931 and 1939, they were consistently and persistently wrong. I regard them as being perhaps more than any other three men, responsible for the fact that we are involved in a war which the wise collective organisation of peace could have prevented, and just as they lacked courage, initiative, imagination, psychological understanding, liveliness and self respect in the conduct of foreign policy, so I feel that the absence of those qualities has manifested itself in the actual conduct of the war. I have the genuine apprehension that if these men remain in office, we run a grave risk of losing this war. That would be fatal and a terrible thing for this country and, indeed, for the future of the human race. We are fighting for our lives. Humanity is struggling for its freedom. The issues of the war are too great for us to risk losing it by keeping in office men who have been there for a long time and have not shown themselves too well fitted for the task. There is much more than politics involved in this discussion. There is the war and all its consequences. Because we feel, in view of the gravity of the events which we are debating, that the House has a duty and that every Member has a responsibility to record his particular judgment upon them, we feel we must divide the House at the end of our Debate to-day.

We have as assets in this war the qualities of our people. We have for the winning of this war British ability, British spirit and British determination. The qualities of our people are great, the abilities of our people are considerable, the spirit of our people is high. But if that ability, spirit and determination are to be used, they must be led by Ministers who will command the respect of the population and whose lead the population will be happy and proud to follow. Further, we have our British material. But you cannot get the best out of those material resources, Ministers plan and organise for the most effective the war. The speeches of my right hon. Friends who

yesterday and the speech which will be made by my right hon Friend the Member for Hillsborough (Mr A V Alexander) in due course with others will I think be found to constitute a very serious indictment of the conduct of affairs by His Majesty's Government. I ask hon Members in all parts of the House to realise to the full the responsibility of the vote which they will give to night a vote which will broadly indicate whether they are content with the conduct of affairs or whether they are apprehensive about the conduct of affairs. I have little doubt about the feelings and the apprehensions of our fellow countrymen outside. I ask that the vote of the House shall represent the spirit of the country and give a clear indication that we insistently demand that this struggle be carried through to victory, with all vigour and capacity by the Ministers in command.

THE PRIME MINISTER (MR CHAMBERLAIN) The words which the right hon Gentleman has just uttered make it necessary for me to intervene for a moment or two at this stage. The right hon Gentleman began his speech by emphasising the gravity of the occasion. What he has said the challenge which he has thrown out to the Government in general and the attack which he has made on them and upon me in particular make it graver still. Naturally as head of the Government I accept the primary responsibility for the actions of the Government and my colleagues will not be slow to accept their responsibility too for the actions of the Government. But it is grave not because of any personal consideration—because none of us would desire to hold on to office for a moment longer than we retained the confidence of this House—but because as I warned the House yesterday this is a time of national danger and we are facing a relentless enemy who must be fought by the united action of this country. It may well be that it is a duty to criticise the Government. I do not seek to evade criticism but I say this to my friends in the House—and I have friends in the House. No Government can prosecute a war efficiently unless it has public and Parliamentary support. I accept the challenge. I welcome it indeed. At least we shall see who is with us and who is against us and I call on my friends to support us in the Lobby to night.

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR AIR (SIR SAMUEL HOARE) The right hon. Gentleman the Member for South Hackney (Mr H Morrison) has covered a very wide field and has put me a number of questions. I propose to deal with some of them in the course of my speech and I propose as he himself suggested to leave others of them to my right hon Friend the First Lord of the Admiralty. During yesterday's Debate the Prime Minister dealt at some length with the general position and my right hon Friend the Secretary of State for War dealt in particular with the military operations. I propose with the leave of the House to concentrate my speech on the air side of the events of the last month and the part taken in these operations by the

Royal Air Force. It is the first occasion since I became Secretary of State for Air that I have had the opportunity in this House of saying something of the air operations, and I am sure that hon Members will wish me, at the outset, to give in short outline a description of what the Air Force has been attempting to do during the last three or four weeks.

The Germans were in control of all the strategical aerodromes in Central and Southern Norway [HON MEMBERS "Why?"] That is the critical fact which must never be forgotten in considering the military operations which subsequently took place. Hon Members ask why were the Germans in possession of those aerodromes. I shall deal with that question later, but for the moment let me emphasise this point, that it is the critical fact in the events of the last four weeks that the Germans were in possession of all the strategical aerodromes in Central and Southern Norway. It is a country where there are very few aerodromes and where it is difficult, owing to the nature of the ground, to improvise new landing places. This means that from the very outset the Royal Air Force was suffering under a very heavy handicap. While our machines had to fly hundreds of miles backwards and forwards across the North Sea in the most terrible weather, our enemy had his air bases on the spot. Our enemy was operating upon interior lines of communication and had many refuelling points between Germany and Scandinavia.

In face of these difficulties what was the task that was set the Royal Air Force? The task was to win a foothold in Norway for our fighters and, during the time that attempt was being made, to do everything in its power to reduce the scale of air attack that was being launched upon our sea bases. Faced with that task the Air Force at once set to work. The right hon Gentleman the Member for South Hackney seems to think that there was some delay in starting these operations. I can tell him categorically—and this is the first of my answers to his questions—that there was no such delay. Immediately after the entry of the Germans into Norway, we made an air reconnaissance. Within a comparatively few hours, taking the first night on which the weather made it possible to fly, we started a series of intensive bombing attacks not only upon the aerodromes in Norway but on one of the key aerodromes in Denmark and one of the key aerodromes in Germany. We chose those targets because they were focal points in the enemy's air scheme.

They were, so to speak, their junctions and their refuelling points. From that early day onwards day after day and night after night, in the face of terrible weather conditions and in the face of all the difficulties involved in the long flights backwards and forwards across the North Sea, we maintained these intensive attacks upon these key points. I contend that that effort of the Royal Air Force had very definite and marked results. They were the first of all very materially to reduce the scale of air attack upon our bases and our troops. It is worth mentioning, as an

the lake being covered with great waves of ice and huge masses of snow, to get the runway clear. We lost no time in making the lake ready.

Meanwhile there had already been embarked on one of the aircraft carriers a squadron equipped with Gladiators, a type which acquitted itself so well in Finland. They have not the speed of the Hurricane or the Spitfire but they have a smaller take-off and they are probably the best of the modern fighter biplanes having, as well as the short take off, a very high rate of climb. As soon as the landing ground was ready the pilots of the squadron, who were 18 in number, flew the aircraft off the deck of the aircraft carrier, which was 180 miles from land. They flew off in a thick snowstorm, and these officers yesterday described to me—

ADMIRAL OF THE FLEET SIR ROGER KEYES (Portsmouth, North). How were these Gladiators taken aboard the aircraft carrier?

SIR S. HOARE. I think they were flown on, but I will confirm that.

SIR R. KEYES. Were they flown aboard by naval flying pilots?

SIR S. HOARE. I am speaking of Air Force squadrons. I think they were flown by Air Force officers, but I will confirm that.

COMMANDER BOWER (Cleveland). Is it not a fact that they were flown on by the Fleet Air Arm pilots? Surely it is a matter of the greatest importance.

SIR S. HOARE. I find that they were flown on by Fleet Air Arm pilots, and I would be the last person in the world to say anything to depreciate the courage and efficiency of the Fleet Air Arm.

MR. GEORGE GRIFFITHS (Hemsworth). You do not seem to know anything about it.

SIR S. HOARE. It was a combined act which is the kind of act I hope we shall see in future between the Fleet Air Arm and the Royal Air Force. At 7 o'clock that evening they landed on the lake and began to establish themselves, and by 10 p.m. the first patrol was in the air. That night it froze hard, and the Dawn Patrol was not able to take off until 5 a.m. owing to the very hard frost. Let the House notice what happened next. The first German bombers appeared at 5 a.m. and were at once engaged. The battle thus begun continued without intermission until about 8.30 p.m. The German High Command concentrated upon the lake an immense attack of bombers, and it is credibly said that something like 80 bombers took part. They were over the lake continuously for 15 hours, so continuously that it is hardly possible to speak of separate attacks. Tons of high

explosive bombs were dropped on the surface of the aerodrome, which was sprayed ceaselessly with machine gun fire. During that period there were 37 combats, and six German machines were brought down close to the lake. It seems certain that another eight German machines were brought down in the vicinity. The squadron leader and the flight lieutenant whom I saw yesterday told me they are confident that no fewer than 30 German machines were put out of operation in the course of these 15 hours.

I give these facts to make it clear that there was no foundation for the rumours that were going round about this squadron not having been in action. I give them also to show how different would have been the situation in central Norway supposing we had been able to win air bases from which we could have operated our fighter squadrons. This instance, if any is needed, shows the quality of the British fighter. With air bases properly defended I am confident that the course of the events of the last four weeks would have been entirely transformed. I am glad to say, and the House, I am sure, will be glad of this information, that His Majesty has been pleased to confer a number of decorations on this very gallant squadron.

MR DALTON (Bishop Auckland). May I ask, in order to complete the very gallant story which we are glad to hear, whatever we may think of the politicians, whether there were any anti-aircraft guns to engage the Germans in the neighbourhood?

SIR S. HOARE. No, I am sorry to say there were not. The arrangements for anti-aircraft guns had been upset by the sinkings of ships, and it was a question whether to hurry on the squadron or wait some further days for the anti-aircraft guns. On the whole, we took the decision, and I believe it was a right one, to send the aeroplanes on and to engage the German bombers at once.

MR BARNES (East Ham, South). Was this squadron withdrawn after the lake was destroyed?

SIR S. HOARE. I am afraid that the effect of this bombing attack was to destroy a number of the machines. The account given by the Germans of the machines having been destroyed was incorrect, but the greater part of the machines after this gallant battle were put out of action by the bombing. They were put out of action on the ground, not one of them was brought down in the air.

I have given, in justice to the Air Force, this short account of the splendid part that they have played in the operations of the last few weeks. I come now to the questions that arise from these operations and to the lessons that I suggest the House should learn from them. It seems to me that the central question that arises from the operations is this: Did we underrate the power of the air? Did we realise the devastating damage that air power could inflict if there were no counter attack against it? From

last month's production are by far the best figures we have ever had and I am convinced myself that they are not exceptional. They are not due to any circumstances peculiar to one month more than another. I believe they do show that the momentum is now gathering speed. A right hon. Gentleman opposite says

Now but let no one underrate the difficulty of developing a great programme of this kind. The figures are much better than they have ever been and I see no reason why they should not steadily become better and better.

MR DALTON May I ask the right hon. Gentleman one question before he sits down? He was asked a question by my right hon. Friend which has importance and interest—whether the statement published in the *Daily Telegraph* two days ago that the Germans are actually now using for German fighters aerodromes in the Narvik sector is true? If so what comment has he to make upon it?

SIR S. HOARE The statement so far as I know is without any foundation and I have therefore no comment. We have no knowledge of any such aerodromes and I should think it is extremely unlikely that it is true.

MR H. MORRISON The questions I put about the Intelligence Service are to be answered by the First Lord of the Admiralty. I understand?

SIR S. HOARE *and cated assent*

MR LLOYD GEORGE I intervene with more reluctance than usual in this Debate. All my hon. Friends know very well that I hesitated whether I should take part in it at all because I thought it was more desirable that we should have a discussion in which Members not of front bench rank should take a good deal of the time but I think that it is my duty having regard to the fact that I have some experience of these matters. I feel that I ought to say something from such experience as I have had in the past of the conduct of war in victory and in disaster about what I think of the present situation and what really ought to be done. I have heard most of the speech of the right hon. Gentleman the Secretary of State for Air and I should think that the facts which he gave us justify the criticism against the Government and are no defence of the Government. He said that we had practically no chance of making good in our Norwegian expedition unless we were able to have our air bases there which would enable us to put our fighters into the air in order to counteract the very destructive effect of the German aeroplanes. But we knew there were no air bases available. We knew they were in the hands of the enemy.

The right hon. Gentleman admits that. He says that the Government knew beforehand that there were no air bases unless they were captured from the enemy, he even intimates that the

object of the Trondheim expedition was to capture an air base. In that case we ought to have had picked men, and not a kind of a scratch team. We ought to have sent the very best men available, especially as we could not send the whole of our forces in the first instalment. The first instalment ought to have been picked men, because the Germans had picked men, as is generally accepted. We sent there, I think, a Territorial Brigade which had not had very much training. They were very young men, but they were the advance party of an expeditionary force which had to accomplish a task upon which the success of the whole force depended. We ought also to have had combined action between the Army and the Navy. We had neither. We gambled on the chance of getting air bases. We did not take any measures that would guarantee success. This vital expedition, which would have made a vast difference to this country's strategical position, and an infinite difference to her prestige in the world, was made dependent upon this half-prepared, half-baked expeditionary force, without any combination at all between the Army and the Navy. There could not have been a more serious condemnation of the whole action of the Government in respect of Norway. They knew perfectly well that the Germans were preparing for a raid on some adjoining country, probably in the Balkans, and it is a severe condemnation of them that they should have gambled in this way. The right hon. Gentleman spoke about the gallantry of our men, and we are all equally proud of them. It thrills us to read the stories. All the more shame that we should have made fools of them.

is in our favour, or adding up the numbers of ships sunk on either side. That kind of petty-cash balance-sheet is not the thing to look at. There are more serious realities than that.

First of all, we are strategically in a very much worse position than we were before. Now see those words, as they pass along, "strategically better," "strategically worse," because victory or defeat may depend upon the application of those two words. The greatest triumph of this extraordinary man Hitler has been that he has succeeded in putting his country into an infinitely better strategical position to wage war than his predecessors did in 1914, and by what he has done now he has increased his own advantages and he has put us into greater jeopardy. Let us face it like men of British blood. Graver perils than this have been fought through in the past. Let us face it; just look at it. Czecho-Slovakia, that spear-head, aimed at the heart of Germany, broken. A million of the finest troops in Europe of a very well-educated race of free men, all gone. Such advantage as there is in Czecho-Slovakia, with its great lines of fortifications and its Skoda works, which turned out the finest artillery in the 1914 war, are in the hands of Hitler. That is one strategic advantage which we have handed over to the enemy.

What is the next? The position—— [*Interruption.*] You will have to listen to it, either now or later on. Hitler does not answer the whips of the Patronage Secretary. What is the second? The second is that you had a Franco-Russian Alliance, negotiated by an old friend of mine, M. Barthou, by which Russia was to come to the aid of Czecho-Slovakia if France did. There would have been a two-front war for Germany. She knows what that means, because she had it before. That door is closed. We sent a third-class clerk to negotiate with the Prime Minister of the greatest country in the world, while Germany sent her Foreign Secretary with a resplendent retinue. That door is closed. Oil in Russian ships is now coming across the Black Sea for the aeroplanes of Germany. Strategically, that was an immense victory for the Nazi Government.

The third—Rumania. We have tried to form one big syndicate, but Germany has been there starting, not one syndicate, but little syndicates here and there to develop the land, to increase production of work and to give her all sorts of machinery. She has practically got Rumania in her hands; and if she did not have it in her hands a month ago, by this failure in Norway you have handed over Rumania. What else? Spain. I am hoping that my fears about that will not prove true. Now you have Scandinavia and Norway, which were one of the great strategic possibilities of the war, and they are in German hands. It is no use criticising Sweden. Sweden is now between Germany on the left and Germany on the right. [HON. MEMBERS: "Russia!"] No, Germany. She is between Germany in Norway and Germany on the Baltic. What right have we to criticise the little Powers? We promised to rescue them. We promised to protect them.

We never sent an aeroplane to Poland. We were too late in Norway, although we had the warning of ships in the Baltic and barges crammed with troops. They have to think about themselves. They do not want German troops on their soil, and they are definitely frightened, and for good reasons. Just see what it means strategically. It deprives us of a possible opening in that direction. That has gone. It brings the German aeroplanes and submarines 200 miles nearer our coast. It does more than that. There is the opening-up of the Baltic. I venture to say that that will be considered, in regard to the protection of our trade and commerce. It is a grave menace. Strategically, we are infinitely worse off.

With regard to our prestige, can you doubt that that has been impaired? You have only to read the friendly American papers to find out, highly friendly papers that were backing us up through thick and thin, in a country which was pro Ally. I do not know whether hon. Members ever listen to the British Broadcasting Corporation's relay of the American commentator, Mr Raymond Gram Swing. He is very remarkable. He gave an account of the change in American opinion. He said that what has happened was a hammer-blow to Americans. They were perfectly dazed. Before that they were convinced that victory was going to be won by the Allies, and they had never any doubt about it. This is the first doubt that has entered their minds, and they said, "It will be up to us to defend Democracy."

Then there are the neutral countries. We promised Poland, we promised Czecho-Slovakia. We said "We will defend your frontiers if you will revise them." There was a promise to Poland, to Norway, and to Finland. Our promissory notes are now rubbish on the market. [HON. MEMBERS: "Shame!"] Tell me one country at the present moment, one neutral country, that would be prepared to stand up and finance us on a mere promise from us? What is the use of not facing facts?

MR. GEORGE BALFOUR (Hampstead). We offered aid to Finland, and it was not accepted. Norway and Sweden were asked for the right to go through and help Finland, but they would not help us, and in default of pledges to the League of Nations would not give us the opportunity to help Finland. There was no promise at all.

MR. LLOYD GEORGE. I cannot re-open that matter. [HON. MEMBERS: "Oh!"] I am quite prepared to do so, but the facts are that we did not carry out our promise to Finland.

MR. BALFOUR. What promise?

MR. LLOYD GEORGE. The facts were all given by another hon. Member.

MR. BALFOUR: Give them yourself now.

MR LLOYD GEORGE The hon Member for Stockton-on-Tees (Mr H Macmillan) gave the whole of the facts and they have never been answered yet. That is the situation with regard to our strategical position. What is the use of denying it? It is one of the facts that we have to face. We have to restore that prestige in the world if we are to win this war. There is also the fact that the state of our preparations is known to the world. We started these preparations five years ago in 1935. In 1935 a promise of rearmament was made, in 1936 active proposals were submitted to this House and were passed without a Division. The Government said they would commit us to £1 500 000 000. If they had asked for more and had said that it was necessary, there was no party in this House which would have challenged it. [Interruption] If any party had challenged it you had your majority. What has been done? Is there anyone in this House who will say that he is satisfied with the speed and efficiency of the preparations in any respect for air for Army yea for Navy? Everybody is disappointed. Everybody knows that whatever was done was done half heartedly, ineffectively, without drive and unintelligently. For three or four years I thought to myself that the facts with regard to Germany were exaggerated by the First Lord because the then Prime Minister—not this Prime Minister—said that they were not true. The First Lord was right about it. Then came the war. The tempo was hardly speeded up. There was the same leisureliness and inefficiency. Will anybody tell me that he is satisfied with what we have done about aeroplanes tanks guns especially anti aircraft guns? Is anyone here satisfied with the steps we took to train an Army to use them? Nobody is satisfied. The whole world knows that. And here we are in the worst strategic position in which this country has ever been placed.

SIR PATRICK HANNON (Birmingham, Moseley) We have our sea power.

MR LLOYD GEORGE I wish we had used it in some parts of Norway. I do not think that the First Lord was entirely responsible for all the things that happened there.

MR CHURCHILL I take complete responsibility for every thing that has been done by the Admiralty, and I take my full share of the burden.

MR LLOYD GEORGE The right hon Gentleman must not allow himself to be converted into an air raid shelter to keep the splinters from hitting his colleagues. But that is the position and we must face it. I agree with the Prime Minister that we must face it as a people and not as a party nor as a personal issue. The Prime Minister is not in a position to make his personal respect inseparable from the interests of the country.

THE PRIME MINISTER: What is the meaning of that observation? I have never represented that my personality—
[HON MEMBERS "You did!"] On the contrary, I took pains to say that personalities ought to have no place in these matters

MR LLOYD GEORGE. I was not here when the right hon Gentleman made the observation, but he definitely appealed on a question which is a great national, Imperial and world issue. He said, "I have got my friends." It is not a question of who are the Prime Minister's friends. It is a far bigger issue. The Prime Minister must remember that he has met this formidable foe of ours in peace and in war. He has always been worsted. He is not in a position to put it on the ground of friendship. He has appealed for sacrifice. The nation is prepared for every sacrifice so long as it has leadership, so long as the Government show clearly what they are aiming at and so long as the nation is confident that those who are leading it are doing their best. I say solemnly that the Prime Minister should give an example of sacrifice, because there is nothing which can contribute more to victory in this war than that he should sacrifice the seals of office.

MR LAMBERT (South Molton) The concluding observations of the right hon Gentleman presented a direct challenge. I happen to have been in the House of Commons nearly as long as he has. If I thought that my vote to-night would put the Prime Minister out, I certainly would not give it. [Interruption]

I say to the Labour Members that they are not helping in the conduct of the war when they continually snipe at the Prime Minister and his friends. We are told that we are all "Yes men." I am not a "Yes man." I am as independent as any man over here. But I have a genuine apprehension for the future of the country. These acrimonious Debates are undermining the strength of the country by undermining confidence in those who have the direction of affairs. What suggestion has been made for the change of Government which is proposed? What sort of Government is suggested? Who is to be Prime Minister? After all, this is the House of Commons, democratically elected, and I ask Members whom they suggest as Prime Minister, other than my right hon Friend the present Prime Minister.

Think what has happened in this House this afternoon. Questions have been asked of the Secretary of State for Air and of other Ministers. Is there such a thing as that in Germany? Does anybody imagine that Hitler is being cross-examined about the scuttling of the *Graf Spee* or the destruction of the destroyers at Narvik? Hitler will not permit anything to be done to undermine his authority, and, therefore, we should not do anything to undermine the authority of the men who are running the war for us. I listened in the early days of the war to a gentleman who was called Lord Haw Haw. He tried to sap our confidence.

of this war and has developed in them a very sensitive judgment as to how the war has been conducted.

Upon certain points I found in contact with Americans of every sort and kind almost unanimous agreement. Uniformly they take the view that the efforts of this country have been ill organised and have been permeated with a spirit of indecision and a lack of boldness that would seem to arise out of the failure to appreciate the extreme seriousness of the war situation. I do not think that I met anybody excepting of course British officials and members of the American administration whose lips were sealed upon such matters who had a good word to say for the British Government as at present constituted. Of the Prime Minister and the Chancellor of the Exchequer they were scathing in their criticism and the question that was put to me more than any other while I was in America was Why was it that the British people if they desired to win this war, did not bring about a change of Government? Certainly they regard such a change as essential and measure the necessity in weeks and in months.

SIR WILLIAM DAVISON (Kensington South) What reasons did they give?

SIR S CRIPPS If you will apply to Mr Stimson he will give you the reason as regards the Chancellor of the Exchequer and if you apply to many others they will give you the history from the time of Munich onwards about the Prime Minister and these are full and sufficient reasons.

SIR W DAVISON Let the House of Commons know what they are.

SIR S CRIPPS I am trying to inform the hon Gentleman and others what American opinion really is. They are certainly of the view and this was made clear by the American Press that the prestige of this Government has suffered another serious blow in the events which have taken place in Norway. These criticisms were so markedly universal in America that it was absolutely impossible for anybody to overlook them. When one returns to this country after an absence of some months, trying in the meantime to observe from a distance the development of events one is at once struck by the depressing atmosphere which prevails in this country. In the Far East for instance in such place as China however difficult material matters may be for people one senses an intense feeling of hope and of life. In this country there seems to be no conviction of success for a just cause. [HON MEMBERS Oh] A desire but no conviction. There is doubt and despondency widely expressed on all sides.

No one will convince me that the spirit has gone out of the people but it is obvious that undecided and half hearted

leadership has created a sense of frustration in the people where bold leadership would give confidence and courage. In almost every Department of the Government the same fatal indecision and lack of realisation of the urgency of the situation seem to rule. Indeed, it is hardly possible to detect in some cases where the Government have yet made up their mind that this country must be organised for victory regardless of all costs. There are constant calls made by Ministers for great and united efforts by the people, but they have wholly failed to organise those great and united efforts. Whether it is foreign policy, supply, strategy, or any other matter, there exists to day an opportunist indecision, now apparently favouring one line of policy and now favouring another line of policy, and it is this hesitation and vacillation which is paralysing the efforts of our country, and which is fatal to our chances of victory. Now, Mr. Speaker, the Government seems to be in a state of almost perpetual fear of something. They are sometimes afraid because of the wicked efficiency of our enemy and are sometimes frightened by some possible action that may be taken by a neutral or even, indeed, of vested interests in this country itself. They are dodging along a circuitous route, attempting somehow or other to avoid the objects of their fear. There is only one fear which ought to influence the Government in these circumstances, and that is the fear of British democracy, which ought to drive them into bold and resolute action. The recent campaign in Norway is, I believe, absolutely typical of their indecision. I believe their prime blunder in this campaign goes further back than the time of the German occupation of the coastal ports of Norway.

There are two possible policies open to a Government fighting this war in the present circumstances. First of all, to observe strictly all neutral rights and the obligations of international law, with a view to doing what they conceive to be right and in the hope that by so doing they will win the sympathy of the neutrals and perhaps gain their moral or, even, material support, and, second, to descend to the level of our enemy and meet him with his own weapons, with a complete disregard of all international standards of behaviour that have hitherto been accepted as reasonable and necessary for a civilised world. The one thing that is impossible in the circumstances is the attempt to combine these two policies. If some half way policy is followed then we miss the advantages of the first and fail to reap the advantages of the second. The Norwegian problem was one of cutting off what we rightly regarded as one of Germany's most vital sources of supply—the Swedish iron ore. But just as we regard it as a vital matter to us, so obviously must Germany regard it as a vital matter to them that they should do their utmost to continue that supply. It was not a question of merely stopping up some small hole in the net of the blockade, it was a question of absolutely first-class importance to both sides.

Our Government after prolonged hesitation—and I would

out that the First Lord of the Admiralty in his speech on 11th April drew attention to our care for international obligations—came to the conclusion that they must abandon the first policy—that of observing strictly the rights of neutrals—and as a result decided to lay minefields in Norwegian territorial waters. That was a vitally important decision on a major question of policy as regards the conduct of the whole war and not as regards Norway alone. Whether it was right or wrong it is not at the moment material to inquire, but the laying of the mines was just as much an infringement of the neutral rights of Norway as the sending of ships into the Norwegian fiords or landing guns on Norwegian soil.

It is quite idle to adopt the argument that it was only a little infringement or that we were compelled to do it, or as the First Lord said in his speech that in the last war the Norwegians were persuaded to do it by the Allied Powers. So far as neutrals and the rest of the world are concerned it was an abandonment by Great Britain of the policy of observing strictly the rights of neutrals. That certainly was the view taken in America when I was there and German propaganda which is a hundred times more efficient than ours especially in neutral countries soon convinced people that this was the fact. The Prime Minister in his speech yesterday said that no one would suggest that we should have gone into Bergen or Trondheim, I suggest he could never have made that remark if he had prefaced his story of the account of the Norwegian incident by the decision of the Cabinet to infringe Norwegian neutrality. Apparently the Government must have thought that that degree of action, the laying of the minefields, would be sufficient to achieve their purpose and that they did not want to go further than they thought their purpose demanded. They tried to compromise between two policies and hoped that in the face of Hitler they would get away with the compromise. They must have failed wholly in appreciation of the sort of enemy they were up against. Hitler was not going to watch his vital supplies being cut off and do nothing about it. It was known that he had large forces available in the Baltic and in German ports. He was waiting until the need and opportunity came to use them and the British Government gave him both.

VICE ADMIRAL TAYLOR (Paddington South) Were not the operations by Germany started before the mines were laid?

SIR S. CRIPPS No the operations by Germany were started simultaneously with the laying of the mines. That was what we were told by the Prime Minister. [HON. MEMBERS: No and Hear hear.] The notice and the publicity as regards the coming intention was long before. But the hon. and gallant Gentleman need not trouble about dates. Hitler does not trouble about dates.

VICE ADMIRAL TAYLOR But the hon. and learned Gentleman is making a point about the matter.

SIR S CRIPPS Directly it became clear that we were determined to take steps to stop the Swedish ore supply getting to Germany, Hitler made preparations with which to counter our action. But the hon and gallant Gentleman will never convince me and I shall not convince him. The fatal mistake was the indecision of the policy we were following. We tried to compromise, and as a result landed ourselves and Norway in the present situation. Obviously, Hitler would not raise his standard to meet our compromising attitude. He would not content himself with merely counter mining Norwegian waters. When he acted he acted thoroughly and quickly. We should have done the same. Once we made up our minds that it was necessary to abandon our observance of international law we ought to have done it thoroughly, because that was the only way we could safeguard ourselves and minimise the danger to Norway. Our ships should have been in Norwegian fiords before Hitler could get there, ready to meet him. If necessary Bergen, Trondheim and Stavanger should have been taken under our protection for the time being.

MR MACLAREN (Burslem) In the event of the British going in and Norwegian forts opening fire on our ships, would we have been entitled to fire back, kill Norwegians and then take over the ports?

SIR S CRIPPS The hon Gentleman does not get out of the dilemma by that. I have not suggested that it was a right policy to infringe Norwegian neutrality. All I say is that having decided to infringe it, you should have infringed it properly and not exposed yourself to every danger that occurred, especially so in view of the particular difficulties of the terrain and the obvious danger of air bombardment. So far as not contemplating further infringements of Norwegian neutrality, as the Prime Minister suggests, are concerned, it was criminal carelessness to open up this situation of danger in Scandinavia without taking steps to guard against the obvious reaction of the Germans. It was the fatal confusion between the two policies which led to the defeat that followed. I do not intend to follow out what might have been done to retrieve the situation except to say again that there was apparently indecision and delay. It was apparently intended at the very beginning to use our surface ships to force the fiords at Trondheim and other points on the Norwegian coast and also for the purpose of cutting off German reinforcements from getting to Oslo. I say this because of the internal evidence of that fact in the statement made by the First Lord of the Admiralty on 11th April. Whatever his intention may have been in making that statement it is certainly the interpretation which was put upon it by many of the most skilled observers. Let me remind the House of one or two extracts from that speech. He said

"Hitler has effected with his German lodgements of various strengths at many points of the Norwegian coasts and he has felled with a

single hammer blow the inoffensive Kingdom of Denmark, but we shall take all we want off this Norwegian coast now with an enormous increase in the facility and in the efficiency of our blockade.

Later on he said

He has made a whole series of commitments upon the Norwegian coast for which he will now have to fight if necessary during the whole summer against Powers possessing vastly superior naval forces and able to transport them to the scenes of action more easily than he can

And finally he said

All German ships in the Skaggerak and the Kattegat will be sunk and by night all ships will be sunk as opportunity serves

Such claims could not be substantiated unless we were prepared at that date 11th April to risk our surface vessels as well as our submarines and to make sure of the easy transport of our land forces by the action of surface vessels in the Norwegian fiords I am certain that the First Lord intended such action at the time and that the British Navy was thoroughly capable of carrying it out I do not believe that that speech was mere idle bombast The situation has not developed as was then forecast because in my belief there was a change of policy as to the use of naval forces caused very likely by the fear that the loss of capital ships if it occurred might tempt Mussolini to come into the war against us If that was considered an overriding matter the First Lord of the Admiralty should never have made that speech he did on 11th April It is largely that speech broadcast round the world that has in the light of our withdrawal from South and Central Norway had such a damaging effect upon our prestige The First Lord in that speech spoke of the need for

unceasing and increasing vigour to turn to the utmost profit the strategic blunder into which our mortal enemy has been provoked

I wonder if he realises the significance which will be given to that word provoked This whole episode discloses not unceasing and increasing vigour but hesitation and wavering and indecision It is far more important for this country and this House that we should learn the lesson of these events than spend time in reviewing what might or might not have been done to save a situation into which we should never have put ourselves It is not some isolated blunder or mistake from which we are suffering There will always be isolated mistakes however good the direction of affairs may be We are suffering to day from the inability of our leaders to concert and carry through definite policies from a lack of leadership of the people The Government in their oft repeated pleas for unity mistake their own safety for that of the country No one can fail to observe the rising tide of criticism even in the ranks of the Conservative party The people of this country are not afraid of the truth nor will they hold back from any sacrifice that is necessary But they will not

stand wasteful and inefficient administration or doubtful and hesitant leadership in times as critical as these

Every hon Member to-day has a duty which I believe far transcends any party loyalty; it is a duty to the people of the country as a whole. To allow personal interests or party loyalty to stand in the way of necessary changes of government is at the present time to act as a traitor to one's country. We as a House bear the ultimate responsibility to the people so long as we pose as a democracy. If we shirk that responsibility we join the Fifth Column as Hitler's helps. The Prime Minister intervened to-day in order to make an appeal to the House to give the Government and himself their support in this critical time. I never thought that I should be present in this House of Commons when in a moment so grave a Prime Minister would appeal upon personal grounds and personal friendship to the loyalty of the House of Commons. I trust that those revealing sentences which he spoke will show that he is unfit to carry on the government of this country.

MR DUFF COOPER (Westminster, St George's) : Some heat and passion have been engendered in the Debate, and I certainly hope that nothing I shall say will add to them. Heat and passion are the last things that anybody would wish to be moving hon Members in the House this afternoon. Many of us have been urging and hoping for a truly national Government, not since the outbreak of war, but since the first defeat—the defeat of Munich. More than ever is it necessary to-day. Now it is plain, whatever may be the rights and wrongs or merits of the right hon Member for South Molton, that the present Opposition are not prepared to enter into a Coalition Government under the leadership of the present Prime Minister. We may deplore the fact or not, but it is a fact, and I do not think it is right to taunt hon Gentlemen opposite with their unwillingness to accept responsibility simply because they are unwilling to accept a certain leadership.

I would say further to the right hon Member for South Molton that if the view which he expressed, namely, that we should not criticise the Government in war-time had been adhered to throughout the last war, he would not have followed the right hon Gentleman the Member for Carnarvon Boroughs (Mr Lloyd George), as he told us he did, on 11th November, across to St Margaret's, Westminster, in order to celebrate the victory. I deplored the change of Government that took place at the end of 1916. However, I recognise that, for reasons which may have been wrong reasons, which may have been unjust reasons, which may have been due to *Press clamour*, at that time Mr Asquith had completely lost the confidence of the country—I thought, wrongly—and I know that throughout the country and throughout the Army in France the advent of the right hon Gentleman to power had a wonderfully stimulating effect upon morale.

I would not criticise Ministers for using in the past, as they

have done, the language of optimism, and I would not quarrel with the dictum that more often than not it is unwise and undesirable, and even unpatriotic, to say anything in public or in private which can discourage the enthusiasm and the hopes of the nation, or can lessen their belief and their faith in the Government. Ninety nine times out of 100 that dictum is right, but to-day is the one hundredth occasion. This is one of the greatest and most important Debates in which hon. Members have ever taken part, and to-day, in my opinion, we must throw away all respect for friendships, party loyalties and personal affection, and pay attention only to two questions—the absolute truth and the welfare of the country.

Frankly, I am sorry that the right hon. Member for South Hackney (Mr. H. Morrison) announced the intention of dividing the House. I think it would have been far better to have had no Division. I had hoped that the Government would be sufficiently impressed by the line which the two days' Debate has followed, by the speeches that they have heard, by the information which must have reached them through private sources to take some drastic steps of reform, which so many of us feel are urgently needed. But while I regretted the announcement of the right hon. Member for South Hackney, I am bound to admit that I regretted still more the subsequent intervention of the Prime Minister when he appealed to the affection of his friends. I resented that appeal because I felt it would only be with the deepest reluctance and regret that I should vote against a Government led by him. Since I was compelled, owing to my own beliefs at the time, 18 months ago or more, to resign from his Administration, I have never found myself obliged to vote against him. In times of peace, when the issues were issues such as the Ministry of Supply, the demand for which he so long resisted, I felt that my conscience was clear in abstaining from offering a vote upon the matter, but in time of war I feel that the issue is too urgent, I feel that this is not a time when any man has a right to wash his hands like Pontius Pilate, and take neither one side nor the other. On this occasion with the deepest reluctance, I shall be obliged to signify the lack of confidence that I feel in the present Administration by going into the Lobby against him.

I listened to the Prime Minister yesterday, and I was deeply disappointed by his speech, because I had hoped that he would have announced some important reform. I had hoped he would have realised, what the country has realised, that we are speaking to-day under the shadow of a great defeat. We have had many defeats in these last three disastrous years. Again and again we have met in this House, sometimes summoned suddenly in an emergency always to record a setback, a disaster, always to listen to the disappointment, the astonishment and the surprise of the Prime Minister; but nearly always it has been followed by some reaction, by some change, by some development. In the three speeches that we have already heard from the Front Bench, the c

has not been the slightest admission that something is fundamentally wrong with the machinery of Government, that there is something rotten in the State. We know it is not in the qualities of our troops, we have no reason to believe it is the imperfection of our equipment, nor has it been stated that there is so far any shortage in supply, as far as the present campaign is concerned; and I will not say there is anything wrong with the character of Ministers. I believe there are on the Front Bench talent, devotion to duty, courage, intelligence, sufficient to form an admirable Cabinet, and, therefore, I am driven back to the conclusion that what is wrong is the instrument of Government itself.

The only change adumbrated in the three speeches which we have heard from the Front Bench is a slight alteration in the position of the right hon. Gentleman the First Lord of the Admiralty. I am not fully clear what that alteration means. We know, strange as the fact may appear, that for the last four years there was a Minister for the Co-ordination of Defence, but that on the eve of the campaign in Norway, which, above any other campaign ever undertaken in the history of war, demanded co-ordination between the forces of sea, and land, and air, the Minister for the Co-ordination of Defence was dismissed and his post abolished. What was considered essential in peace-time was, apparently, no longer regarded as necessary in war. I am not clear whether the right hon. Gentleman is to fulfil the functions of a Minister for the Co-ordination of Defence. I think not. I am not afraid of extra burdens of work being imposed upon the right hon. Gentleman. I know his ability; I know his stamina and the amount of work which he can do. But I do say that it is fundamentally faulty and unwise, and demonstrably wrong, to put one of three Service Ministers in a position superior to the others.

The suggestion which has been put forward that there should be a small War Cabinet was airily dismissed by the Prime Minister on the ground that Lord Hankey did not like it and that the First Lord was opposed to it. I believe there is a certain prejudice against the system as it existed in the last war. It was an innovation, a daring innovation of the right hon. Gentleman the Member for Carnarvon Boroughs (Mr. Lloyd George), but it proved, in the opinion of most people and in the experience of all, an extremely successful innovation. Nevertheless, it has been criticised. Surely the right method would have been to have improved upon that innovation instead of scrapping it and going back to the old method. With all due deference and with all the humility of a private Member, I suggest that that innovation could have been seriously improved.

Why could not that principle be worked out into a definite system? Why not have one Minister for Defence who would be responsible for the War Office, Admiralty, Air Ministry and Ministry of Supply and to whom the Ministers of those Departments would be subordinate? They would have to

orders, but they would be responsible each for his own great Department. They not the Minister of Defence himself, would have to come down to the House of Commons day after day, to answer questions. At present we see the Secretary of State for War wasting his time answering questions about why the wife of Private So and So has not received her allowance. A Minister of Defence such as I suggest would be concerned solely with thinking about and carrying out the defence of the country and the conduct of the war. Secondly, I would have a Minister for the Home Services. He would embrace within his purview all the Home Services and every Department connected with them. He would not have to do the daily, heavy departmental work, but he would keep the small central Government in touch with everything that was happening on the home front. Then there would have to be one Minister who would stand for Foreign Affairs and Information, two subjects which are indivisible. Perhaps it would be necessary to have a junior Minister, say an Under-Secretary at the Foreign Office. Fourthly, there would have to be a Minister for Economics who would be responsible, not only for the Treasury but also for Economic Warfare and for carrying on the blockade. Economic Warfare should be part of the work of the Treasury, but at present as far as I can gather, it is being interfered with at every turn by the Treasury. You might have a fifth Minister—though I, personally, would like to limit the number to the minimum—who would be responsible for all our oversea obligations for the Dominions, the Colonies and India, and if you could secure the services of some distinguished Dominions statesman it would add enormously to the strength of the Government and the solidarity of the Empire.

These are not impossible considerations, but they have all been dismissed by the Prime Minister in a sentence—“Changes of Government may no doubt suggest themselves from time to time”. It is just that kind of phrase which carries despair to the hearts of people who feel the need that something drastic should be done immediately. Changes do not suggest themselves, they have to be suggested.

An hon. Member asked just now for an example of vacillation, and the hon. and learned Member for East Bristol (Sir S. Cripps) gave him the case of Norway. I do not intend to make any criticism on the Norwegian campaign at the present time for the Norwegian campaign is not yet complete. But the case of Finland is for the moment, a finished chapter, and I would like to say a few words upon it. That, at any rate, cannot do any harm in the present situation.

To-day, as usual, we are sitting in anticipation wondering what Italy is going to do. There was a report that our Ambassador had been sent to the head of the Italian State with a stern message, and I was extremely sorry when I found that that report was denied and contradicted as untrue. It is more than three weeks since we have been threatened by Italy, and it is more than three

weeks since Signor Grandi made a speech in which he said Italy could no longer remain an observer. He is perhaps among the five most important people in Italy. In my opinion if he makes a statement like that our Ambassador ought to go to him the next day and say 'What is the meaning of this statement?' Instead of which we read reports in the Press that it is very probable that Italy has deferred intervention in the war for two or three weeks and many people think 'Well that will take us well over Whitsun'. If she does not intervene in the war, it is because Italy considers it is not the moment to do so. As usual I suppose, we shall allow her to judge when the moment is most suitable.

Equally, there is the situation in the Balkans to day—the fast outposts of neutrality. Can we not send out one of our leading statesmen properly equipped to visit the various capitals of these countries and to say to them 'What is your policy what are your plans' and to tell them 'You have two alternatives only before you one is slavery under Germany, and the other is co operation with France and Great Britain. For your own independence and salvation, are you going to choose, for we are forming a Balkan bloc and if you do not come in it it will be very inconvenient for you?' We are not living any longer under the law of nations. There is no law of nations running in Europe. We are living in a state of anarchy and when living in a state of anarchy each man must play for himself. We should not be bound by any scruples in taking any steps we think essential for the salvation

is guaranteed, never any question about the cost of transport that is guaranteed. No one loses anything except the operatives, who lose time through bad weather. Every time when I have been discussing these matters all that I have been consulted about is whether an extra halfpenny in a fortnight's time would be likely to meet a particular situation. That is not the way in which these problems should be tackled. We have heard of nothing but the efforts of those who have been trying to see how far they are able to keep pay down.

I am a practical man who has organised workers who has selected sites, employed technicians, got the materials together and superintended the whole business, who has done many a job in this country, but when I offer my advice no advice which I can give appears to be accepted. I am left entirely on the outside. As I have said, they have a territory which they forbid anyone to invade. If I were a disloyal man, if my efforts in the past had warranted suspicion, I could understand it, but who can say that about me? Have I not given evidence of my good will? If the same thing is happening in other industries on the home front when men of loyalty are willing to help, then it is right that there should be criticism and the Government ought to sit up and take notice of it and give facilities to the practical men who wish to help. I went to Scotland to help in getting man power on to jobs. I travelled all night in the train, met my men and persuaded them to abandon all sorts of restrictions and rules they had evolved from their experience and with a view to their well being in order that we might make some contribution to the common effort. Every attempt to get a little equity in wages is met with opposition. Sitting on some of those committees I have felt that I could burst out laughing. I have passed remarks which I felt were a little too facetious, but I found people not having one tenth the experience of myself being asked to give decisions about these matters.

I am unable to assess the difficulties which arise over the question of costs of construction. Let us take the case of a big camp where say there are 500 men. They say, 'We will start off with a halfpenny and see how we get on, and if there is trouble we will give another halfpenny, and if there is more trouble we will give another halfpenny.' Does anyone believe that is the way to do things? If the conditions on a job become so unbearable that the men are compelled to take industrial action to put it right and they win, then the authority of the management is gone so far as that job is concerned. Never again will the management be able to exercise the same authority. I am not able to assess the loss of money occasioned by incidents such as this. Somebody is guilty, but I am not bringing anyone to the bar, because everything is so evasive, but anyone who knows anything about building or any other work knows that when men are started on a job they should be decently treated and then it is possible to say to them, 'These are the conditions and there

will be no variation of them, because there is a basis of equity in them" If that were done I am confident we should have had a different state of affairs

I remember two instances in which it was reported that there were difficulties about the supply of labour I saw the president of the employers, Mr Parker, a very good man who said "Let us go down to have a look at the jobs and see what the difficulties are" We went on to the sites, we examined the foremen, the resident engineers, the builders and their agents and we found that the facts which had been given to us as being absolutely up to date did not correspond with the facts as we found them on the jobs We not only took it up with the Department, but took it up with the Office of Works We sat up late to write a report, because we had been told it was very urgent but not until nearly a fortnight afterwards were we called together again and then we were told that a fresh situation had arisen and that the date for the completion of the job had been changed It was advanced to the 5th December—fortunately for the Department they did not say which year The job is on yet We realised that when the facts have been checked up with realities and are found to be contrary to the Department's assessment of the situation then something else is introduced to bring about a fresh state of affairs in order that the Department may not be proved to have been wrong Sometimes Members ask questions about costs and when I have been talking to contractors I have asked them, "How is it that your job is so expensive?" They say, "We are waiting for drawings, waiting for plans" There are some 20 000 architects unemployed in this country and I am certain that the services of a number of them could be obtained It is a monstrous thing to see this skilled technical labour idle

I come now to another Department, that dealing with Home Security We were asked to associate ourselves with the Home Secretary and willingly did so It is not the first time the Home Secretary has called upon me and I have given my services as freely as I can We were called upon to assist in setting up rescue and demolition squads for A R P work The employers and ourselves met the architects, the municipal authorities and some other public representatives—I forget who they were. We set up a committee to deal with the first and second rescue and demolition squads That was before the war The men were not coming in fast enough and I was asked to broadcast an appeal, as a result of which many thousands of men joined these first and second rescue and demolition squads. When the war broke out there were certain deficiencies in certain parts which were made up in other ways That was under the Home Office

When the working out of the new arrangements, we expected that, however good it might be there would be certain difficulties Circulars were sent out from the Home Office but some of them were in very ambiguous language. We urged the importance of bringing in local authorities I feel that what we say in this

House we ought to mean, because we are in favour of Democracy, although some people who get a little authority might tend to forget themselves in the distribution of that power among the people. We think that the local authorities are very necessary and should remain in existence. I regard them as fortresses of Democracy in this country, and I hope we shall give local authorities as much power as we can. Men have been trained in the use of high explosives in order that they might be able to help during bombing raids. No doubt they will be able to give a very excellent account of themselves in the unfortunate event of those raids taking place.

In spite of all that we did, we said to the Department: "Let us have a meeting," and we decided upon a chairman who would be approved by everyone. He was a very popular man in Great Britain and he was approved of by the employers, the architects, local authorities and medical science. Everybody thought that he would suit admirably, but this chairman never presided over one committee meeting. The first day that we had a meeting, Sir George Humphreys, who is well known in connection with the London County Council, was appointed temporarily in the chair. Civil engineers and building contractors were there, in regard to the working out of the Home Office circular about first and second rescue and demolition squads, as I, the general secretary of my union, and a Member of Parliament, with qualifications which are perhaps not unimportant, have written letter after letter to the Department and have never had an acknowledgment; I can bring proof of this statement if it is required. It is true that I wrote not to the Home Secretary but to the chief of the Department. Letters have been extraordinarily long in being replied to, and when I have had to report to the building trade on the correspondence you can imagine the derision with which such reports are received.

What happened? After five months our chairman was still unable to get a meeting. The only meeting which he ever attended was a committee meeting where the contractors were able to fix up the price which they could get for a job. We tried to get a meeting of the general consultative committee to discuss many difficulties and to classify them under three or four heads. We tried to get a complaints tribunal, but after five months of being chairman of the committee and without ever having a chance to preside, the chairman resigned, and we have not had a meeting even now, although we were formed before the war. Then the right hon. Member for South Molton (Mr. G. Lambert) says that Labour has not responded to the invitation of the Government to assist them in the war effort. . . .

Sir G. COURTHOPE (Rye): . . . As far as my postbag is concerned—and I expect other hon. Members have had much the same experience—there is no sign of this general and overwhelming desire amongst the electorate for a change either of Government

or of its leader. If that is so, to what can we attribute this tendency which has revealed itself so much in speeches in the last few days to make a mountain out of the Norwegian molehill? .

This enterprise in southern Norway has been spoken of as a terrible disaster, as a calamity—and various other strong words have been used. It was a disappointment—everyone admits that. It was a failure in so far as we did not achieve success in getting Trondheim and a base for our fighting aircraft. But I am doubtful whether, *on balance*, it will prove a failure. I think that the injuries we have inflicted, the difficulties we have created for Germany, and the encouragement we have given to the small but gallant forces of Norway, have been so great that they may very well counterbalance, in the long run, any disappointment and loss of men and material that we have suffered. The force employed was very small, and to suggest that this was a major military disaster is sheer nonsense .

I believe the vast majority of the people of this country are prepared to say, as I say now ' Thank God we are led by a Prime Minister who is not easily rattled and who possesses the gift of patience, which so many of us lack ' .

surprise I am not one of those who think that the war started on 3rd September last year. The war started long before that and as other hon. Members have said we have had a succession of retreats defeat after defeat—Austria Czecho-Slovakia Poland and now Norway. I am not going into the details of them. Other hon. Members have done that and will do so. We have made it a queer war. This Government have made it a queer war by their acceptance of the fact that apparently they consider that the enemy must always have the initiative. By our retreat from one position to another and by our unwillingness ever to act ruthlessly ourselves we have created a situation in which the enemy is playing with us a sort of game of grandmother's foot-steps. We are like a child in the schoolyard. We face the wall and he comes behind us, and every time we turn round we see that he has advanced one step further, and now he has got within measurable and striking distance of this country.

In Norway, even the most ardent supporter of the Government will admit, we were completely and absolutely surprised and rolled up horse, foot and guns. The enemy's stroke was masterly. I cannot subscribe to the Prime Minister's surprise and rather petulant attribution of Hitler's success to a "long planned attack against an unsuspecting and also unarmed people." Has not the Prime Minister even now learnt that German treachery, ruthlessness and barbarity are among the few really predictable factors in this war? Every time it happens the same story is told. Up he gets and expresses surprise and indignation that this should have happened once more. We must admit that the enemy took great risks relying on secrecy, swiftness of action, and, I am very much afraid, upon what he rightly regarded as our inevitable indecision and lack of action. But there is another side to the question. It so happened that in conjunction with the small half-hearted little minelaying operation which we carried out we naturally had covering forces at sea, including a large number of submarines. I am giving away no secrets when I say that these inflicted great loss on the enemy forces and transports. Submarines—I have seen and read their reports—had the time of their lives. They had targets such as I was never given when I was in a submarine in the last war.

The result of all this was that the first day or two after they got into Norway the Germans were reeling. They had not succeeded 100 per cent. they had not succeeded more than 50 per cent. Their stroke at Narvik had failed utterly and in other places they had to resort to sending up troops by aircraft troop carriers. If we could have then made a bold counter-stroke it might have retrieved the whole situation and completely turned the tables. But hours, minutes, even seconds were, as they always are of value in a situation like that. We know now that at Bergen, and a little later at Trondheim the ships of His Majesty's Navy were ready and waiting to emulate the exploits of my friend Philip Vian in the "Cossack" after he went after the "Altmark." But no,

the dead hand from above descended and stopped these operations. Wild horses will not drag from me what dead hand it was. All I say is that it was the dead hand, and it came from above. Everybody knows it.

We all know now, I think, that a frontal attack on Trondheim was the major operation and objective, and that it was to be done in conjunction with two subsidiary operations, at Andalsnes and at Namsos. I say that, in my view at any rate, it was criminal folly, having cut out the hammer blow, to go ahead with these two little side operations, which could not possibly have succeeded in the circumstances.

The Prime Minister has told us that it is too early yet to strike a balance sheet, but at any rate we know this—that the enemy has gained, and we have lost a great deal of prestige. It is the strategical point of view that we must consider. Hitler has deep-water harbours for which he has craved for a generation. I wonder how many hon. Members without any naval experience realise what that means? In the last war the German Fleet had only three or four shallow estuaries, so shallow that their big ships had to wait until high water in order to move out. They were little rat holes. Now she can steal up the Norwegian coast where there are a thousand deep-water harbours in which ships may be safely concealed, and where it is almost impossible for us to get at them. Hon. Members may say that Germany has no fleet, but in fact they have a considerable fleet left. It is not enough to threaten our command of the sea, but it can cause us acute embarrassment because every single unit has free access to the Atlantic and can slip out whenever the weather conditions are favourable, to attack our trade routes.

I confidently predict that as a result in this war we shall again be attacked by such raiders as the *Moewe*, *Wolf* and *Seeadler*, which caused so much damage to our shipping in the last war. Our contraband control will have an immeasurably more difficult task and when hon. Members say that it apparently makes no difference strategically they are talking through their hats. Germany has had heavy losses to her Navy and a great proportion of her surviving ships have been badly damaged, but her Navy is a luxury and ours is a necessity. It is an expendable commodity, and I am perfectly convinced at the present moment that the German Staff is well content that every ship sunk, every ship damaged, and every life lost have been well expended in view of the great strategical importance gained. They have an advantage which may cost us untold millions of pounds, and, what is worse, hundreds of thousands of lives.

I have painted, and deliberately painted, a gloomy picture. On the other side we have the magnificent work of the Navy, Army and Air Force. There are one or two questions arising out of this campaign which have already been asked and there is one which I will ask and which was raised by the right hon. C. the Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Sir A. Sinclair)

this Why since we are so ready to bomb Norwegian aerodromes have we been so extraordinarily unready to bomb German aerodromes? I would like to recall to Members of this House the fact that a raid which was some time ago reported in the Press, was carried out on the island of Borkum by some of our Blenheims. In that raid they dropped no bombs. They were only allowed to shoot up the aerodromes with machine guns and puncture a few holes in aeroplanes. That raid produced an absolute and complete surprise—our planes arrived unheralded out of the blue and could have bombed the whole place to smithereens at a height of 500 feet. Every machine could have got back. But we waited until Germany made an attack on Scapa Flow and if ever there was a legitimate military objective it is Scapa Flow. We at once retaliated by raiding Sylt as if saying—Look here you naughty boy you hit me and I shall give you one back. Everybody knows that every civilian was moved from Sylt months ago. I call that a hesitant and a half-hearted way of waging war.

COLONEL WEDGWOOD (Newcastle under Lyme) On a point of Order. We are listening to a very important speech and is it possible to get any Member of the War Cabinet present? Why is the House left in this critical situation without any Member of the War Cabinet being here?

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER (COLONEL CLIFTON BROWN) That is not a point of Order. I understand that there are good reasons.

COMMANDER BOWER I cannot but say that the whole of our policy before and since the declaration of war has been utterly lacking in initiative. To go back to Norway I have the greatest sympathy for the Norwegian people but quite frankly and as a back bencher I can speak quite frankly I have not much sympathy with the Norwegian Government. I cannot forget the *Altmark* incident and I will now say something which puts me for once in my life in complete agreement with the hon. and learned Member for East Bristol (Sir S. Cripps). It is that at the time of the *Altmark* incident we should have decided then and there that this sort of thing must stop and we should have walked straight into Norway with adequate forces. To-day I notice in *The Times* newspaper a statement which says

It goes without saying, of course, that we could not have landed men in Norway without a Norwegian request or prior to an act of war by the enemy.

Why not when we are fighting for our lives? When you are fighting for your life against a ruthless opponent you cannot be governed by Queensberry rules. This Government would rather lose the war under Queensberry rules than do anything which would become an absolutely perfect gentleman. That kind of thing will not do. We must be prepared in future to treat neutral

nations in accordance with the necessity which is both theirs and ours in the long run. No one single person will ever suggest that if we found it necessary to go into a neutral country we would ever steal their country or impose upon their people the horrors of a Nazi rule. If we have confidence in our cause the world, too, will believe that of us. Some years ago I went into a church and I heard a sermon which was rather striking. After declaiming that the church was decadent and that Christianity was too respectable, the preacher made the somewhat surprising statement, "What we want are some more cads like the Apostles." There is a good deal of substance in that; we want a few more cads in this Government.

War is a continuation of policy, as I was taught at the Staff College. I am absolutely certain that the way we are conducting this war is a continuation of the policy which led up to it, and a policy which will lead us only to inevitable disaster. The First Lord of the Admiralty this evening, I understand, will wind up this Debate. He is a great orator, and I have no doubt will put over a very convincing case, but I am certain that he will not use his great gift of oratory, that harlot of the arts, to present a case in which he does not believe. It is therefore with considerable interest that I shall listen to hear how he contrives to defend a case which up to quite recently he disliked as much as I do. It seems to me that we must have a Government which will be ruthless, relentless, remorseless, and which will take the initiative at once and for the first time keep Hitler guessing where we are going to hit him.

One last word about the other partner to the Axis. This country has lately put up with a good deal of nonsense from the State-controlled Italian Press. One or two hon. Members have gone so far as to talk the old appeasement stuff. That will not do. What we want now is the Copenhagen stuff of the 1801 vintage. If I were Foreign Secretary I would simply send a telegram of two words to Mussolini "Copenhagen 1801," and sign it. My view is that the dead hand must go. This sort of thing cannot go on any longer. I was very sorry to hear this evening the short intervention of the Prime Minister in which he talked about his friends. Of course he has a multitude of friends in this House, and I count myself among them. He has spoken for me in my constituency and has been more than kind to me, especially when I was a young and inexperienced Member of the House. But what has that to do with it? When hon. Members like the hon. and gallant Member for Epsom (Sir A. Southby) get up and suggest that those who disagree with the Prime Minister on questions of policy and think he is not suited to lead this country in a time of crisis are in some way being disloyal to him, such a suggestion is outrageous and contemptible.

To day our loyalty is not to a man or to a party, or even to a country. It is a loyalty to all those things which 2,000 years of Christian civilisation have built up and which we cannot

let go. That is what we are fighting for and to reduce the thing to the level of a petty personal loyalty is impossible. I believe that this Debate is one of the most important that has ever taken place in the history of this country and on it will depend whether we ultimately go forward to victory or whether in a couple of hundred years time some future Gibbon writes of the decline and fall of a great ideal.

MR A EDWARDS (Middlesbrough East) I am grateful to the hon. and gallant Member for the Cleveland Division (Commander Bower) whose constituency adjoins mine for his speech, and I am sure that many electors in the district will appreciate the speech he has made to night. I hope that some hon. Members opposite who have been taunting hon. Members on this side with not throwing in their weight with the Government will demonstrate their dissatisfaction with the Government. It is all very well for hon. Members to make fine speeches and not have the courage to record their votes against the Government. We have had many courageous speeches on other occasions but no action in the Division Lobby. We have learned one thing from the Debate and particularly from the Secretary of State for Air. The one thing that has struck me in this Debate was the cold blooded smugness of the Secretary of State for Air. He told us that Hitler had to pay odds of three to one which was a good investment. It is no use telling us that we have not lost the case. I know something about our requirements as regards iron ore and we have not yet got the iron ore.

I want to put this point perfectly clearly. We have been told that the reason we have lost the war in Norway is that we did not have an air base. We have been told by the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State for Air that had we had a base for our fighter planes we should have won that if there had been landing places we could have supported our troops and the story would have been entirely different. As a simple minded amateur I am wondering whether in the network of the fiords there were no good places for landing. I am told that the type of aeroplanes we have are no good for this purpose. I hope the First Lord will deal with the point. It is a challenge to him. If the success or failure of the war in Norway depended on having an air base were the Government advised by their experts that they could fit floats to fighter planes and so use them? If that is so why were they not quickly fitted out?

I have discussed this matter with someone who knows even more about it than does the hon. Member and he assures me that not only is this possible, but that at the moment they are going ahead with it. If that is so why could it not have been done before?

If what I am saying is true and it has been turned down it is a very serious indictment of the Government. There will leave this country to-morrow a gentleman whom the late Secretary of

State for Air knows well, one of the greatest engineers in aeronautics this country has ever produced. He is going out to do a great job abroad, and my conviction is that he is being forced out of the country because he cannot get his suggestions considered. I am not speaking without the knowledge of the people on whom I am basing my remarks. The right hon. Gentleman knows the people and he knows the difficulties there have been with these people. He knows that these officials have been causing obstruction and delay. The right hon. Gentleman now has the leisure to look into these things and I want to put this to him as a test. At this moment some of the engineers with whom I am acquainted have put forward a very important development which requires equipment to the extent of about £10 000. It was considered for two or three days at Harrogate and was turned down. It has been referred to the Treasury, and it will surely take three months before the Treasury do anything about it. I put this as a test because three months from to day I shall raise this matter and see whether that is not the case. I am convinced we can defeat Hitler if we can defeat the Departments. Having known something of these Departments during recent months, I feel that if we do not overcome these people who are holding up things, we shall be in great danger.

MR BROOKE (Lewisham West). I wonder whether hon. Members have realised what is the sharpest shortage of all which impedes our victory. It is not a shortage of bulk man power, as it was in 1914. The absence of the necessity for a great recruiting campaign has left the country un-beflagged and unstirred. We have to take account of these things. It may be that the Government have not taken sufficient account of them. The sharpest shortage of all is the shortage of skilled man power, and by that I mean not only skill of hand but skill of brain.

I should like to see more urgent attention being paid by Ministers to the rapid mobilisation of the brain power of this country. We have the Central Register and other machinery but it does not function as swiftly as it might. While hon. Members are concentrating on the politicians I think they would be well advised to examine whether the Civil Service is changing as rapidly as the conditions necessitate.

MR A. V. ALEXANDER (Sheffield Hillsborough). I beg hon. Members opposite to believe me when I say that if we have pressed for a change in the outlook, and if necessary in the composition of the Government it is because we know the feeling which exists in many parts of the country already with regard to the operations in Norway. I do not know whether many of my hon. Friends have had a similar experience, but I have received communications in the last two or three days since the return of some of our forces from Norway, notably from Leicestershire, Northamptonshire and many parts of Yorkshire. These displ

that is to say, what information had we of German intentions, and what were our preparations in anticipation of those events? We have had a good many questions put from different parts of the House about our intelligence service, and I hope that I shall be answered in the light of those questions. I listened to my right hon. Friend and Leader yesterday, putting the point with very great relevance whether or not there was in existence as far back as 1926 a properly prepared plan by the German High Command for the invasion of Norway and Sweden, and whether that plan of the German High Command was known to the British Staff. We have had no answer at all to that question. The source of our information is unimpeachable, and, if necessary, I am prepared to let the First Lord of the Admiralty know what it is, but I do not want to say it here in the House.

If that was so, what was the plan of the War Cabinet and the staff to counter those known German plans? We ought to have an answer to this question. Is the First Lord coming? Where is he? One wonders whether to go on, in these circumstances.

THE PRIME MINISTER : My right hon. Friend will be here in a moment.

destroyers, which victory was led by the forces under the *Warspite*, the attack was not pressed home and possession taken, not only of Narvik and its resources, but of the nearby aerodrome, the absence of which aerodrome and aerodrome services we have heard so much about in this campaign. If all that had been done, I think there was much to be said for going and getting complete control of this port which if not taken was likely to be the source of export of iron ore to Sweden. From that centre a resting place in the best fiord, you could have done a great deal of mopping up the coast proceeding from the North to the South.

Was the expedition that actually took place a short time after to the West of Norway always intended, or was it an afterthought? The more I have listened during the past two days, the more I feel that the first idea was to concentrate on Narvik and that this expedition to the West of Norway was an afterthought. If so, it may perhaps explain a great deal of the amount of improvisation which was made for the plans, troops and materials to deal with the situation. Or was it really intended to be the beginning of a major campaign in Norway? If it was intended to be the beginning of a major campaign in Norway, may we ask the First Lord whether there was a plan which had been thought out first in relation to the required maintenance of a continuous ferry to and from the South of Norway and this country, and requiring the constant protection from naval forces over such distances in vastly different circumstances from the maintenance of the ferry which we have to keep going in the English Channel for our troops in France? Before a decision was taken to make any landing in the Trondheim area, were these contingencies fully weighed in conjunction with the contingencies likely to arise in other areas?

In view of the statement which has been made about the necessity for maintaining forces elsewhere, in the Mediterranean and in other seas, let me say that I could understand these considerations being regarded as of fundamental importance if they were thought of before launching a major campaign in the Trondheim area, but I cannot understand the same importance being attached to this matter after the campaign had been launched and if in the meantime the balance of naval strength had been very much altered in our favour by the huge destruction of German naval ships and ancillary vessels. I should like to know from the First Lord of the Admiralty what was the exact position in this matter. Having made a decision to land in the Trondheim area, may we ask the First Lord to tell the House—because nobody has told the House effectively yet—why was the attack not made directly upon Trondheim? Why was the attack not made also upon the German naval forces remaining in the Trondheim Fiord which, I have only learned since, became such a deadly menace to our troops in the Namsos area who were approaching to attack Trondheim on the land? May we ask the First Lord. Was it a Cabinet decision to avoid such an action, or was that decision made because

the Cabinet was satisfied that landings in small ports many miles away from Trondheim, ill-equipped and with unsatisfactory facilities would prove to be satisfactory?

With regard to the ports and the unsatisfactory facilities I would like to say that I have never listened to a more unconvincing statement than that given by the Secretary of State for War last night. It is inconceivable to me that the exact facts about the conditions of these ports and their equipment were not known without as the Secretary of State suggested, having a new and immediate reconnaissance. I have always understood—and I myself have had experience in a Service Department—that matters of that kind could be disposed of by the First Lord of the Admiralty and the Secretary of State through the Attachés' department and, if not through that department certainly through the Consular department. Perhaps the Secretary of State did not think it worth while to ask the Consular department what was the equipment. At any rate, there was unjustified delay in these matters because of the lack of reconnaissance to find out whether there was sufficient equipment at these ports of landing. To have to carry out such reconnaissance at such a stage indicates a complete lack of foresight. I have put these questions about the expedition to Norway first, because that was where the main action took place, and took place with results which ended in a decision to evacuate.

The First Lord has also to answer a question of very particular importance. I hope he will answer this question if he is able to do so, and if he has to refuse to do so in the public interest. I want to be fair. I have always understood, in my study of naval affairs, that the first duty of the Fleet in war is to seek out and to destroy the fleet of the enemy. That this was begun gallantly at Narvik is quite certain. That other actions took place in Scandinavian waters which redound as much to the lustre of the men of the Royal Navy as any in our history, is also certain. But was consideration given, directly upon receiving news of the German invasion of Norway, to the question of dealing with enemy surface ships in the Kattegat and Skagerrak, and thereby destroying as much as possible of the enemy fleet while, at the same time, giving an opportunity to the Norwegian troops to consolidate their positions? While our submarines did a great piece of work in the cutting of enemy communications and in harassing the enemy, it was quite impossible to make any really effective attacks upon the full flow of reinforcements, equipment and heavy artillery into Southern Norway unless the Fleet were prepared, subject to risk to take the normal course of sending surface ships into that area, in order to prevent the action of the enemy's surface ships from interfering unduly with the work of our submarines.

I had not the pleasure of having the presence of the First Lord when I was referring to the services of the officers and men of our submarines. Their services have been truly magnificent—

and I hope that at some date not too far distant it will be possible for the Admiralty to get the permission of the Ministry of Information to give some of the signals which were received by the submarine officers—but we know that, over and over again those submarines were subject to the repeated attacks of enemy surface ships, destroyers and cruisers and to attack by means of depth charges all the time. If the Fleet was doing its proper job it is argued by many naval officers to whom I have spoken, the surface ships should have been there meeting the enemy surface ships and interrupting the enemy's lines of communication. I ask the First Lord: Was the sending of these ships into these waters considered to be either unnecessary or too risky? I cannot believe that it was regarded as being unnecessary, and on the question of risk—this is perhaps the point on which the First Lord may not feel at liberty to reply—I must say that if we are to look back upon the campaign in the Scandinavian waters as being the first great occasion under modern conditions of war in which the whole scale of our action has been changed by the consideration of the risk of new kinds of warfare it means that for every subsequent naval action that we undertake during the whole of this war, we may be faced with the same conditions, the same necessity for considerations of that kind gravely affecting what may be the effectiveness of our sea power. We ought to know more about whether it was considered too risky to send our surface ships to attack the enemy in that way.

What was the consideration given to measures for counteracting the growing attacks from the air against our forces in Norway? I listened to the speech of the Secretary of State for Air to day. He told us about the efforts made to get an aerodrome and how an improvisation was made. He did not tell us much, by way of fact as to the losses incurred either by us or by the enemy. He gave us one or two particular instances of actions, like the action of the Gladiator squadron but we ought to have more information than we have been given about that. But when we had once got at the point of knowing that the whole position of our land forces had become endangered will the First Lord tell us whether the War Cabinet reconsidered the question of attacking Trondheim? On this point two things are outstanding in my mind. The first is the speech of the hon. and gallant Member for North Portsmouth (Sir R. Keyes) who put particularly the fact that from his angle strong representations continued to be made to the Admiralty as to the practicability of that naval attack upon Trondheim. The First Lord will agree that the hon. and gallant Admiral was by no means the only source of representation to the Admiralty about this particular sphere of operations and we ought to know whether in that condition of the campaign reconsideration was given to that problem.

The Secretary of State for Air made reference this afternoon to the surveying for alternative aerodromes. I have not yet from him when the survey was put into operation how

lasted whether it is continuing and whether apart from the frozen lake to which he referred there has been any result of his survey. I really must say that with the information that we have up to the present of the reported progress of the German forces first up to Mosjoen and now up as far North as Mo I should feel very much more inclined to believe what is said by the Government as to their determination still to stand by Norway if I could think that they were getting alternative air accommodation now in the North of Norway and making a really defensive contact with the Norwegian troops who are still fighting.

I should like to ask how far the Expeditionary Force was provided first with troops and, secondly, with equipment and armaments. I referred briefly before the First Lord came into the Chamber to the statements which are being received from the families of men who have now returned from Norway with regard to equipment and armament. On this my right hon. Friend the Member for South Hackney this afternoon asked questions which have not up to the present been answered. I feel that the Opposition in fact the whole House are entitled to have these questions answered. In the first place it was mentioned that the landing of anti aircraft guns was late. In certain instances it was reported to us and, I believe in thoroughly good faith communicated to the Leader of the Opposition that troops were there in some cases a whole week subject to attack from the air and without the advantage of anti aircraft guns and in other cases that the guns which arrived there had no projectors with them. Why not? We ought not to have an expedition of this importance sent into such a difficult country and against such conditions of air attack with a lack of support of this kind.

I have been particularly asked to put to the Government a question as to what were the real provisions for feeding the troops that were sent to Norway. I find that one of the most hefty complaints coming from relatives during the last few days is very often that they were without food. It might well be that with these bombing attacks which descended upon certain areas perhaps dumps of transport and stores were destroyed and there was temporary shortage. I understand that, but I hope that we are not going to hear that there was such mismanagement that very often the main stores themselves were not available.

What was the relation—and again my right hon. Friend the Member for South Hackney asked this question this afternoon—with regard to the command in Norway? Was there proper unity of command between the North Western Expeditionary Force and the Norwegian forces? If so how was it effected? In view of what is being said about the future of the campaign in Norway, what is the relationship now? I think we are entitled to know that and I am sure the First Lord ought to answer this. What German naval forces remain in Norwegian fiords to night? German vessels are apparently still out in those fiords. What steps have been taken to destroy them? Because they should

be destroyed. When those ships came out of German waters I think everybody felt at last the enemy had shown his nose out of port and that now was the time to go for him. It is certainly not a happy thing to-night to feel that not only have we been driven out of Norway so far but that German ships are actually in Norwegian fiords.

My last question to the First Lord—and I hope he will not think I have been overburdening him with questions, although we have not had many answers yet—is: What are we doing now, this week, in regard to active and effective steps to capture Narvik and consolidate our position there? The First Lord said he hoped I would not expect him to answer that. All that I say is that I certainly do not ask him to give me details of his operational plans, but I do feel that this country needs to be assured that we are really going out to capture the place. It was very disturbing to read a telegram with regard to that area in the last few days, and it is to that point that I want the First Lord to direct his attention. I think there is no doubt in the minds of the majority of the Members of the House that this campaign, while it does not give real cause for panic in a great nation like ours, is a very serious reverse. It is serious with regard to the additional strategical advantages and with regard to what that reverse carries with it to the enemy.

I regret to say that it is bringing home to the minds of the people at large the disappointment and failures we have received at the hands of the Administration, as at present led. The Prime Minister intervened rather indignantly this afternoon with reference to the decision, made known to the House by my right hon. Friend the Member for South Hackney, that because of our dissatisfaction at the general position, we are asking the House to divide upon the Motion for the Adjournment in order to express, as we have the duty to express in that vote, our real view of the situation. I have heard a number of comments since from various parts of the House, but it is not the occasion for me to-night, nor have I the time, to produce a recital of the facts which make many of my hon. Friends and, as I gather, many Members in all parts of the House, feel as they do about the need for the vote to-night. But when we are considering the position created in this great struggle, at a time when following upon this reverse and not only because of this reverse we are facing one of the most dangerous periods in the history of this country, it is a great pity that the Prime Minister should at once have jumped up and intervened, mostly, as I thought, upon the basis of his friendships in the House. [HON. MEMBERS: "No!"] I think he said, "I have friends in the House," and he indicated that by the vote there would be a record of who those friends were.

MR. GEORGE BALFOUR rose—

MR. ALEXANDER: I have only one or two moments and I have not interrupted any single speaker. It is very

to be interrupted in dealing with such an important matter. The hon. Member for Hampstead (Mr. G. Balfour) has no right to say that what I have said is quite untrue. It is true.

MR. NEIL MACLEAN (Glasgow Govan) Call him to order.

MR. SPEAKER Is the hon. Member talking to me?

MR. MACLEAN I am talking to you, Sir.

MR. SPEAKER Interruptions have not only been from one side of the House.

MR. ALEXANDER I apologise to the First Lord if I have to take another few moments, but I want to deal with this matter in the right spirit. I am sure that the Prime Minister does not resent my presentation of the case, but if he does, then his colleague will be able to deal with it. The impression which was left upon our minds was that the Prime Minister made his appeal on the basis of his friendships in the House and indicated that by taking a vote they would know who their friends were. I think I am within the recollection of hon. Members. All that I can say upon that matter is this. Perhaps I am usually inclined to be provocative in the statement of a case, perhaps I state a case strongly, but on this occasion I look upon the vote we have to take from the point of view only of the conditions and the future of our country. When a great poet in the last war wrote

Who dies if England lives?

he was stating something which throbs the heart of many people to-day who are facing perhaps a greater threat to freedom and liberty than was the case in 1914. If it is necessary at this or any other time for us to change personalities in dealing with the political direction of the country or those who are dealing with the technical direction of the processes of the war, then in the interests of the nation and in the interests of freedom those changes should take place. I want to add this. Since the Prime Minister made his intervention to-day, I have had more than one contact with representative neutrals in London who feel that if this matter were to be judged upon the basis of putting personal friendship and personalities before the question of really winning the war, we should do a great deal to alienate the sympathy that remains with us in neutral spheres.

The FIRST LORD OF THE ADMIRALTY (MR. CHURCHILL) The right hon. Gentleman, the Member for Hillsborough (Mr. Alexander) has placed the House under some obligation because he has devoted the greater part of his speech to the topic which was set out as being the staple of our discussion during these two days of Debate—I mean the Norwegian campaign. He has asked me a great many questions—I think about 20—and while I have tried to keep a check of as many as I could,

I am afraid that if I made my speech merely a catalogue of answers it would hardly be couched in that form which the House would expect, and of course, there are many questions of those which could not be answered without opening up some other topics and other chains of inquiry. Therefore, I would prefer to answer the principal questions in the general account which I will attempt to give to the House. The right hon. Gentleman's speech dealt with the Norwegian campaign, that is the first part of the Debate this evening, and it is the part of the Debate to which I intend to devote myself in the first instance. But at about five o'clock quite a new issue was sprung upon the House. We were invited to consider all the faults which the Government have committed in the last three, four or five years, and to consider the question of a vote of confidence, a Vote of Censure, which is to be taken quite unexpectedly, with only this little notice, upon the Adjournment to-night. That is the second part of the Debate, and I will deal with that when I come to it.

I would like to say a few things about the subject of the Norwegian campaign and also about the general war. In this war we are frequently asked, "Why do you not take the initiative, why do you repeatedly wait and wonder where the enemy is going to strike you next?" Obviously, he has many choices open. We always seem to be waiting, and when we are struck, then we take some action. "Why," it is asked, "is the next blow not going to be struck by Britain?" The reason for this serious disadvantage of our not having the initiative is one which cannot speedily be removed, and it is our failure in the last five years to maintain or regain air parity in numbers with Germany. That is an old story, and it is a long story—a very long story, let me remind the House—because for the first two years, when I, with some friends, was pressing this upon the House, it was not only the Government who objected, but both the Opposition parties. In the last two years or so, they came round and gave great and valuable aid, but the fact remains that we failed to achieve the air parity which was considered to be vital to our security. The fact of our numerical deficiency in the air, in spite of our superiority in quality, both in men and material—which is I believe established—has condemned us and will condemn us for some time to come, to a great deal of difficulty and suffering and danger, which we must endure with firmness, until more favourable conditions can be established, as assuredly they will be established.

I think he must be a wise man who thinks he knows all about this war, or who is not prepared to alter his scale of values as new events unfold. It is no use thinking of this war in terms of the last war. The power of the air has greatly affected—some believe it has decisively affected—the movements of fleets and armies. We must not exaggerate this new factor—I find myself almost resenting the exaggeration of this new factor—but neither must we refuse to give it its deadly due.

For instance, the right hon. Gentleman asked me a number of

questions about the Skagerrak and why we had not cut the communications there. Our present naval preponderance, it is said, ought to make it feasible for us to dominate the Skagerrak with our surface ships and thus cut the communications with Oslo from the first moment and continuously. But the immense enemy air strength which can be brought to bear upon our patrolling craft has made this method far too costly to be adopted. It could only be enforced by maintaining a standing surface patrol and a patrol, mark you, not of destroyers, because it is close to the enemy air bases and it is also close to their cruisers and their battle cruisers of which they still retain two. Consequently, very important forces would have to be employed, in order to maintain a steady surface patrol, and the losses which would be inflicted upon that patrol from the air would, undoubtedly, very soon constitute a naval disaster. We have to face a fact like that.

Then, it is said, "Instead of maintaining a regular patrol, you might have had a raid." Here again, air strength, in this period when the nights are already shortening, impedes the approaching forces and either the transports are removed from the area and sent back to their ports, or adequate forces are provided by the enemy to deal with the approaching raid. I am sorry, indeed, that things should be so, but it would be very foolish in these days, when we are repeatedly asked, in almost every speech, to face facts, if they were ignored. We, therefore, adopted the submarine blockade as the only method at our disposal, and in doing this, followed the opinion of our naval authorities, who are responsible for handling the fleets not only from the Admiralty but on the ships at sea.

Here let me say a word about responsible opinion. There is a great deal of difference between being responsible for giving an order, on which the loss of several valuable ships might swiftly follow, and merely expressing an opinion, however well-informed, however sincere, however courageous, without such responsibility. I have to be guided in the advice which I offer to the Cabinet, by responsible naval expert opinion, just as the right hon. Gentleman would be guided by it, if he were occupying the place which he once occupied with a very considerable measure of naval esteem. Therefore we limited our operations in the Skagerrak to the submarines. In order to make this work as effective as possible, the usual restrictions which we have imposed on the actions of our submarines were relaxed. As I told the House, all German ships by day and all ships by night were to be sunk as opportunity served. This statement was most falsely and grotesquely twisted and travestied into a sort of promise that all German ships would be sunk. I have seen an echo coming from the United States. No one could ever have given so absurd a promise as that. I said *the toll would be heavy, and heavy indeed it has been*. There has been a ghastly success; 7,000 or 8,000 men have been drowned, and thousands of corpses have been washed up on the rocks at the entrance of Oslo. At the foot of the lighthouse, the most

frightful scenes have been witnessed. But what does the loss of 7 000 or 8 000 men matter to a totalitarian State? What do they matter to a Government such as that which we are fighting? They are not announced, no criticism is allowed, no murmur is allowed and no news. If there is a cry or a whimper it is probably dealt with by a brutal blow. Therefore that heavy loss does not operate in the moral or psychological sphere at all at the present time.

Well then the question was asked by a very influential person, not a Member of the House, Mr. Bevin—who is a friend of mine, working hard for the public cause and a man who has much gift to help and who asked in a public speech—Why when we went into Narvik on the first occasion, did you not send a big ship in with the destroyers and Captain Warburton Lee? I think that it should have its answer, and I will give it. The reason was that the only ship available was a battle cruiser and we only have three battle-cruisers and we felt that it would be a very great damage to the balance of the Fleet if we lost a battle cruiser. We thought it very likely that a ship going in might be lost. We sent the *Warspite* there, but it did not look so easy the day before it was done as the day after. Craven and inept authorities at the Admiralty who took that risk were very relieved to find that there were no controlled minefields laid, no special traps of one kind or another in the fiord, no destroyer lurking in some angle where it could fire its bouquet of torpedoes at the *Warspite*. We were very glad to know that a submarine which followed up was effectively sunk by an aircraft of the *Warspite* herself. All these are very different things when looked at beforehand than they are when looked at after. But what would have been said if it had been sunk? Who was the madman who sent one of our most valuable ships into narrow congested waters like these where it could easily fall a prey to the many dangers surrounding it? It is easy when you have no responsibility. If you dare and forfeit is exacted it is murder of our sailors and if you are prudent you are craven, cowardly, inept and timid.

Then we were asked why we did not go into Bergen, Trondheim and other ports in the first few hours. My right hon. Friend the Member for Sparkbrook (Mr. Amery) said we had been rather led astray or decoyed away by the two German heavy battle-cruisers which came out to sea and that they were a fake and a lure. They may have been a fake and a lure but they were certainly a reality. If we had tried to send transports carrying troops across waters where they, although unlocated, were known to be lurking they might have cut the whole squadron of transports to rags. It would have been a very tragic incident and we were happily spared from it. The only object of going into these fiords unless we had troops to land and fight the Germans who had just arrived would have been to destroy such enemy cruisers and destroyers as were there. These were largely destroyed from the air by the Fleet Air Arm. As for the two that were lurking in Trondheim

harbour one was a destroyer and one a small torpedo boat and they were overlooked by the air. It would not have been justifiable to undertake to force Trondheim Fiord merely for the purpose of cleaning up that very small item.

SIR R. KEELIS My right hon. Friend is aware that this destroyer and torpedo boat did defeat our military thrust from Namsos?

MR. CHURCHILL I am sure my hon. and gallant Friend is always accurate in what he says but that is not the point I am discussing now. The question was whether at the outset we should have sent these vessels in. I can see that this is a matter that might well have been done but the cost would have been disproportionate to the particular advantage and it could not have been foreseen that these two small craft would have played the part they did play in the subsequent operations.

I now come to the much more important question of Trondheim. There is no dispute that it was our duty to do our best to help the Norwegians and that the capture and defence of Trondheim was the best way to do it. My eye has always been fixed on Narvik there it seemed to me is a port which may lead to some decisive achievement in the war. But when the German outrage occurred there is no dispute that we were bound to go to the aid of the Norwegians and that Trondheim was the place. A plan was prepared by the joint staffs for two diversionary landings at Namsos and Andalsnes and for a direct landing in Trondheim Fiord of a force superior to that of the enemy which had seized that port. This was undoubtedly a hazardous operation. The forts at the entrance presented no serious difficulty and the guns were not of a very formidable character, but the fact that a very large number of valuable ships would have to be continuously exposed for many hours to close bombing meant that grievous losses might be sustained. And although perhaps only one in two or three hundred bombs hit—we have had scores of ships under hours and hours of bombing—yet every now and again there is a hit and the injury is disproportionate altogether to the power and value of the aircraft which inflicts it. Nevertheless the Navy were perfectly ready to carry the troops in and no doubt was entertained about their ability to do so.

Why then was this plan which was timed for 25th April, abandoned? It was abandoned because on the 17th the two diversionary landings had made good progress and it seemed much easier to capture Trondheim by this method than to incur the heavy cost of direct attack. I must make it perfectly clear that the Admiralty never withdrew their offer or considered the operation impracticable in the naval aspect. Grave doubts were, however, entertained by the military as to the possibility of making an opposed landing under heavy hostile air superiority apart from the existence of machine guns and in these circumstances the

Chiefs of Staff and not only the Chiefs of Staff but their Deputies or Vice-chiefs as they are now called, without the slightest difference of opinion so far as I am aware advised that it would be less costly and surer to convert the diversionary landings into the main attack. No one has the slightest right to suggest that the Navy withdrew from this undertaking or that the politicians overruled the Admirals. I take the fullest responsibility—and so do the Prime Minister and the other Ministers concerned—for having accepted the unanimous view of our expert advisers. I thought they were right at the time and on the information we then had and I have seen no reason to alter my view by what I have learned since.

However the situation rapidly became worse. In the first place the German thrust North of Oslo developed enormous strength. The Norwegians were unable to hold the mountain passes and they did not destroy the roads and railways. By the 25th or 26th the possibility of the arrival in the region South of Trondheim of very large German forces thoroughly equipped and maintained had to be foreseen. At the same time the intense and continuous bombing of the bases at Namsos and Andalsnes prevented the landing at these small fishing ports of any large reinforcements even of the artillery for the infantry we had already landed and of the many supplies for the troops already landed. It was therefore necessary to withdraw the troops or leave them to be destroyed by overwhelming force. The decision to withdraw was undoubtedly sound and the extrication and the re-embarkation of those 12 000 men—for that is all there were less than a division—was accomplished with very great skill and I may also add with very good luck.

Now that is the story of what happened and why. As I have said all the responsible Naval and Military and Air authorities together with the Ministers principally concerned and the War Cabinet were at every stage united and I expect that if any dozen Members of this House had been brought into this matter day by day they would equally have been united. But that does not of course end the question.

of Staff supported by their officers. I do not think that settles the question. Ministers are not sheltered by the fact that they accept their experts' advice. On the other hand they are very unsheltered if they over-ride that advice. But whether they were sheltered or unsheltered the results were very bad and very disappointing and the question arose whether if we persisted in the direct naval attack events would have turned out better. Personally I have always believed that the Navy would have carried troops into Trondheim Fiord and that the troops would have been able to make their lodgment in the Fiord and come to grips with the enemy. I would have been very glad to take all possible responsibility for the step provided that it was properly supported by expert opinion.

Even if we assume that that view is right and that we could have been masters of Trondheim or its ruins for such it would have speedily become by 25th April the question immediately arose. Could we have brought to bear a sufficient Army South of Trondheim to hold the invader or drive him off? It is true that we should have had as the right hon. Gentleman has said one good aerodrome together with proper quays for landing larger forces and artillery and that we might by this time perhaps have been building up a front on a line South of Trondheim between the sea and the Swedish border but even if we had at the present time got 25 000 or 30 000 Allied troops into action on this front which in view of the enemy's air superiority is highly questionable such a force would not have been able to arrive in time or be equipped with the necessary artillery in time or to get anything like equal air support in time. I do not believe that it would have been able to withstand the immense weight of the attack which was being delivered by the Germans from their magnificent base at Oslo and up the two lines of railway and road from Oslo to the North. There can be no doubt whatever that the German base at Oslo and the German communications northward were incomparably superior to anything that we could have obtained at Trondheim and at the various small ancillary landing places which we used. It would have been a very unsatisfactory struggle at a great disadvantage and at a disproportionate cost to the Allies. There are already over 120 000 German troops operating in South and Central Norway and although we could have thrown in continual reinforcements I cannot believe that there was the slightest chance of ultimate success and it would have been a struggle between an army based on Trondheim and a German army based on Oslo. That aspect of the matter had to be considered by the military experts as to whether the Germans could reinforce more quickly than we could. There was no means by which their air superiority could have been overcome. We should therefore have been committed to a forlorn operation on an ever increasing scale.

Therefore whatever view we may take of the chances of the attack on Trondheim the decision to abandon it although it was

taken for different reasons from those I have just mentioned, was not only reasonable at the time, but has, I believe saved us in the upshot from a most disastrous entanglement. It often happens in war that an operation which is successful on a small scale becomes vicious if it is multiplied by three four or five times. We must be careful not to exhaust our Air Force, in view of the much graver dangers which might come upon us at any time, and also not to throw such a strain on our flotillas and anti-aircraft cruisers as might hamper the general mobility of the Fleet. There are other waters of which we have to think besides the Norwegian waters, and I can think of nothing more likely to bring new adversaries down upon us in other waters than the spectacle of our being too largely absorbed under the most unfavourable conditions in a protracted struggle around Trondheim. Of course, if Sweden had come to the rescue of Norway if her troops had entered, as they could easily have done, and if her air bases had been at the disposal of the Royal Air Force, very different positions might have been established. There has unhappily, never been any chance of that. The Swedish Government, like many other people, have been confined to adverse criticism of His Majesty's Government.

We are now fighting hard for Northern Norway and in particular for Narvik, and I will not attempt to predict how the struggle will go, nor will I give any information about it at all. I will content myself with saying that the conditions in that area are much more equal so far as ability to reinforce it is concerned—much more equal and much more favourable than those which would have developed in Central Norway.

MR ALEXANDER: May I ask this specific question? Could the First Lord tell us whether we are now in possession of the aerodrome at Narvik?

action and that they shrank from it and restrained it. There is not a word of truth in all that. [AN HON. MEMBER: "Who said it?"] After all, you said you wanted the truth. I am surprised that there are some Members of Parliament who let themselves do it, but I saw it stated yesterday in the *News Chronicle* that it was the politicians and not the naval officers who countermanded at the last moment the orders to attack Trondheim. All I can say is that I think a proper withdrawal should be made.

MR. VERNON BARTLETT (Bridgwater): I am sorry to interrupt, but I am a Member of Parliament, and I also write for the *News Chronicle*. I do not think that I wrote anything bearing that sense.

MR. CHURCHILL: I fully accept anything which the hon. Gentleman says in good faith, but I think he should look at what he wrote, and—as we say—for greater security, I will send him a copy.

I must say a word about my hon. and gallant Friend the Admiral, to whom we listened with so much pleasure yesterday, when he made the best speech I have heard him make. I sympathise intensely with his desire to lead a valiant attack and to repeat in Scandinavian waters the immortal glories of the Zeebrugge Mole, but I am sorry that this natural impulse should have led him to cast aspersions upon his old shipmates and his old staff officers, Sir Dudley Pound and Vice-Admiral Phillips, and to speak in disparaging terms of them. I did not know them before I went to the Admiralty. I went there, as the House knows, on the day that war broke out. Eight months of war has led me to feel a very strong and solid confidence in them and also in the Commander-in-Chief of the Home Fleet, Sir Charles Forbes—confidence in their capacity and massive good sense and in their knowledge, which is kept constantly up-to-date by contacts with modern conditions—and I believe the Fleet itself has confidence in them. Therefore, when my hon. and gallant Friend came to me with his plan for forcing an entrance into Trondheim, I could only tell him that there was already a plan very similar to his, though I thought his was to some extent to be preferred; but that we had abandoned the plan. [AN HON. MEMBER: "Because it was too late."] We abandoned the plan for the reasons I have given.

MR. ARTHUR GREENWOOD (Wakefield): The right hon. Gentleman has been blaming the Chiefs of Staff—or taking the responsibility on behalf of the Chiefs of Staff. Is it a fact that the War Cabinet delayed taking a decision about attacking Trondheim?

MR. CHURCHILL: Not for a moment. Do dismiss these delusions. When my hon. and gallant Friend tells us, as he did, "he himself volunteered to lead the attack, I can only say that,

had the attack been delivered, that privilege had been reserved to himself by the Commander-in-Chief, Sir Charles Forbes

I have dealt, as far as I can in the time open to me with the details of this Trondheim story, but I must say that I cannot recede at all from the statement I made, which has been much criticised, that this invasion of Norway by Hitler has been a cardinal political and strategic error. In the brown hours, when baffling news comes, and disappointing news, I always turn for refreshment to the reports of the German wireless. I love to read the lies they tell of all the British ships they have sunk so many times over, and to survey the fools' paradise in which they find it necessary to keep their deluded serfs and robots. The Germans have claimed to have sunk or damaged 11 battleships, actually, two have been slightly damaged—neither of them withdrawn for a day from the service. They have claimed three aircraft carriers heavily damaged, the facts are that one was slightly injured by a near miss, and that it is still going on in the service. They have declared that they have sunk or damaged 28 cruisers, actually, one anti-aircraft cruiser has sustained damage. As to destroyers, and so forth—I could go on, but I will not. The only point on which they have not exaggerated is the sinking of trawlers. We have, unhappily, lost 11 trawlers in the Government service at one time or another, and that explains all these "battleships" in the German accounts.

My right hon. Friend—I always call him that—the Member for Carnarvon (Mr. Lloyd George) said we must not mention calculations of profit and loss, but I do not agree. Calculations of profit and loss are our life. We win by these calculations of the ships we sink. It seems to me that, although Hitler's sudden over-running of the vast regions of Norway has had astonishing and unwelcome effects, nevertheless, the advantages rest substantially with us. I will give some of the facts which are worth mentioning. Hitler has certainly lost ten lives for every one—not that he cares for that, I agree. He has condemned a large part of the Scandinavian peninsula and Denmark to enter the Nazi empire of Hungryland. He has committed an act of self blockage. We see no reason why our control over commerce of the seas should not become even more effective now that the Norwegian corridor exists no longer, and now that unhappy Denmark, when her reserves have been devoured, will no longer be the purveyor of bacon and butter and the channel of trade and communications with the outer world.

Although Hitler has treacherously received a large part of Norway it is perhaps forgotten that like our own people the Norwegians live largely by the sea. The French and the British mercantile marine can now rely upon the invaluable support and co-operation of the Norwegian merchant fleet, the fourth largest in the world, and on the services of seamen whose skill and daring are well known. Also we have taken into our service a very large amount of Danish shipping which will be of the greatest assistance.

These are notable facts when we remember that the British and French losses through enemy action since the war are barely 800,000 tons, and the captures and the building have already made good three quarters of that loss [AN HON. MEMBER "Oh"] I dare say the hon Member does not like that He skulks in the corner—[*Interruption*—] What are we quarrelling about? [HON MEMBERS "You should withdraw that"] I will not withdraw it

MR SLOAN (South Ayrshire) On a point of Order [*Interruption*]

MR MACLEAN On a point of Order Is "skulk" a Parliamentary word? The right hon Gentleman used the word "skulk" and I am asking whether it is a Parliamentary word to use to another Member?

MR SPEAKER. It depends whether it applies accurately or not

MR MACLEAN Further to that point of Order—[*Interruption*]

MR CHURCHILL. Finally—[*Interruption*—] Hon Members dare not listen to the argument

MR MACLEAN Are we to understand, Mr Speaker, that a word becomes Parliamentary if it is accurate?

MR CHURCHILL All day long we have had abuse, and now hon Members opposite will not even listen The eight or nine divisions of troops we had withdrawn from the Western Front would be locked up in that country all the summer, defending a coast 800 miles long and indented in a most extraordinary manner

The first part of the Debate was concerned with Norway, but about 5 o'clock this afternoon we were told there was to be a Vote of Censure taken in the form of a vote on the Motion for the Adjournment It seems to me that the House will be absolutely wrong to take such a grave decision in such a precipitate manner, and after such a little notice The question of the dismissal of a Government has always been open to the House of Commons, and no Minister would condescend to hold office unless he had the confidence and support of the House But if the Government are to be dismissed from office, and that is the claim which has been made without scruple, then I think that in time of war at least there should be a solemn Resolution put down on the Paper and full notice given of the Debate ~~Exception has been taken because the Prime Minister said he~~ appealed to his friends He thought he had some friends, and I hope he has some friends He certainly had a good many when things were going well I think it would be most ungenerous

and unworthy of the British character, and the Conservative party, to turn in a moment of difficulty without all the processes of grave Debate which should be taken

Let me say that I am not advocating controversy. We have stood it for the last two days, and if I have broken out, it is not because I mean to seek a quarrel with hon. Gentlemen. On the contrary, I say, let pre-war feuds die, let personal quarrels be forgotten, and let us keep our hatreds for the common enemy. Let party interest be ignored, let all our energies be harnessed, let the whole ability and forces of the nation be hurled into the struggle, and let all the strong horses be pulling on the collar. At no time in the last war were we in greater peril than we are now, and I urge the House strongly to deal with these matters not in a precipitate vote, ill-debated and on a widely discursive field, but in grave time and due time in accordance with the dignity of Parliament.

Question put, "That this House do now adjourn."

The House divided Ayes, 281, Noes, 200

9th May, 1940

MR CLEMENT DAVIES (Montgomery) My hon. Friends and myself do not think it right that this House should adjourn at a time of crisis of this kind for such a long period as 12 days. The situation has been considerably changed by the vote which this House recorded at a late hour yesterday. There is a feeling undoubtedly to-day throughout the country that at last after eight months, or really after 20 months, we should be putting ourselves upon a real war footing. There must be, quite obviously, a reconstruction of the whole of the Government machine, and it is the hope of everyone that now at long last it will be put upon a truly national basis. By that, I do not mean a mere all-party basis, but that the very best persons who are available in the nation should be asked to join the Administration.

I hope also that it will be an Empire Government, and that the representatives of the Empire will also be considered.

The situation is growing more serious day by day. At any moment there may be a new thrust. The thrust that came upon these other countries came overnight. We know how Denmark was invaded, how Norway was invaded. Holland is waiting at this present moment, not knowing when its hour of destiny will arrive. It may arrive to night, it may arrive over this week end. The same thing applies with regard to Belgium and with regard to the Balkans, and we know not what may be before us.

I observe that at present some of the munition factories, like Woolwich Arsenal, are proposing to close down for three or four days, that industry at Sheffield is closing for four or five days, and that some of the mines are closing for three or four days.

and even now the output is not comparable with what it should be at a time like this. What is happening? The Government suggest, not only to this country, but to the rest of the world, that we can just go on as before, that we can go on as in peace-time, that we can have the same kind of adjournment as we had last year and the year before, when war was not threatening us. . . .

MR. BOOTHBY (Aberdeen, East) : Before certain recent events took place my hon. Friends and I felt that, in view of the existing situation, not so much in this country as abroad, it was undesirable that what may perhaps be described as the opening of the summer campaign, this House should separate for as long as 10 days ; and that it might not make a very good impression in the country or outside the country ; and I still feel that very strongly. . . .

It would be idle to pretend that the situation has not been further aggravated, if I may so put it, by what took place in the House last night. We are now confronted not only with a very serious military and strategic situation abroad, but a serious political situation at home. Many of my hon. Friends may disagree with me, but I submit that on the whole, the events of yesterday proved that the Government, as at present constituted, do not possess the confidence of the House and of the country in sufficient measure. [HON. MEMBERS : " No."] That is at least a reasonable interpretation. [HON. MEMBERS : " No."] In these circumstances, I feel it is more than ever necessary that the House should not separate for a period as long as 10 days, leaving behind an administration in which it does not possess sufficient confidence, at any rate in time of war. . . .

MR. LOFTUS (Lowestoft) : When I first read the Amendment on the Order Paper, I had a great deal of sympathy with it, but after the episode of last night I have definitely altered my opinion, and oppose it. I realise, as the hon. Member for East Aberdeen (Mr. Boothby) so eloquently put it, that we are meeting to-day at a time of danger, the gravest danger that our nation has ever faced. Therefore, I feel it is essential that all the political leaders and industrial leaders of the country should consult together to get the strongest possible Government.

The only thing that influences me is this. Which is the best method by which we can abolish personal considerations and party considerations, and all unite together to get the strongest possible Government? Surely, the best method, now that we all realise there has to be a complete change of Government, that there have to be new members from all parties and members from outside, men such as Sir Walter Citrine and Mr. Ernest Bevin in the Government, would be to have this Recess of 10 or 12 days in which daily consultations could take place with the leaders of the Opposition and the leaders of various sections of opinion.

MR. MANDER (Wolverhampton, East) : There is no reason why we should not meet next week, and then, if it is found

desirable to adjourn from day to day, to do so. Obviously, an entirely new situation has arisen as a result of what happened last night. There had always been opposition from this side of the House to the Prime Minister, but what we are faced with now is that last night, on a three-line Whip, after a personal appeal from the Prime Minister, something like 44 loyal supporters of the Government—[*Interruption*] Are they not?—44 Members who take the Government Whip, and who had always supported the Government so far, went into the Lobby against the Government. That number contained not unimportant Back Benchers, but some of the leading personalities in the House. . . . In deciding whether we should adjourn for this period or not, the fact that 18 Government supporters in uniform voted against them is a matter which we have to take into consideration. I say this with reference to the suggestion made by certain hon. Members, who are still guided by party feeling, that we should carry on as if nothing had happened. Obviously, in view of what happened last night the Opposition have to play their part. It is no good having a crisis of this kind, involving as I think the formation of a new Government, a national Government to which we can all contribute our utmost efforts, without every Member, whatever party he may belong, being willing to sink his personality and play his part. I hope that, whether we adjourn until Tuesday next or until the following Tuesday, the intervening period will be usefully occupied.

BRIGADIER-GENERAL SPEARS (Carlisle) If the procedure which has been suggested by the hon. Member for Lowestoft (Mr. Loftus) were possible, I would be entirely in favour of it. If the House were given some assurance that the Recess would be employed to reconstitute the Government, I think that assurance would be welcomed on all sides, but failing any such assurance I do not think, for many reasons, that this House ought to adjourn for the period proposed in the Motion. I am sorry that my right hon. Friend the First Lord of the Admiralty is not in his place. He ought to support the view which I have just expressed, because it is a view which he held very strongly at the beginning of August last when the same question arose. This is what he said on that occasion.

This situation I believe would never have arisen had the Prime Minister consented to reorganise his Government and place it on a national basis as the vast majority of the House wished and if he had in that reorganisation got rid of some of his colleagues whose ability is not perhaps great enough to cope with the war situation and had also eliminated from the Cabinet certain elements which as the House well knows are more given to procrastination and delay than is desirable in time of war.

SIR H. MORRIS JONES I submit that last night's Division has transformed the whole situation in this House. The situation in this House is not the same now as it has been at any time since 1935 when the Government came into office. A very substantial number of Members who usually supported the Government felt in the circumstances of the day that they must oppose the Government and those who did so included a number of Privy Councillors. In addition to that a very considerable number of Members who in the ordinary way support the Government deliberately abstained last night to support them in the Division Lobby and I found myself as one of those abstainers. For one who for five years has known something about the tutelage of the Whips' Office and all its discipline that abstention is a matter which one must take into account. It may not be a very heroic course but a number of Members deliberately abstained last night among whom were a number who generally constantly support the Government and it constitutes one of the most grave reflections on the Government.

MR. SPEAKER I do not see what that has to do with the Adjournment of the House.

SIR H. MORRIS JONES I must bow to your Ruling Mr. Speaker if you will not allow me to develop further arguments which to my mind at all events will weigh with me and many other Members in this House as to why we should not adjourn for the period proposed in this Motion. However I will turn to one or two other reasons which perhaps are not quite so forcible but at the same time they are reasons which appeal to me and I think to Members of this House and to a large number of people in the country. I understand that there are some circumstances connected with the Labour party which would make the adjournment of this House for a less period than proposed in the original Motion a matter of some inconvenience. I am quite sure that that would weigh very considerably with the House but great events are pending in the country at the present time, and not a small event will be the meeting next week of representatives of the working classes of this country.

SIR JOSEPH LAMB (Staffs. Stone) Who are the representatives of the working class in this country?

SIR H. MORRIS-JONES As I was saying, many matters of moment to this country are impending, not the least of which will be to determine whether organised Labour is to participate in the Government of the State. From that point of view I feel that there are considerations which might weigh against the Motion which has been submitted by the Government and which submission has to be proved.

MR EDE (South Shields) During the past two days in the two principal speeches which have been delivered I have heard uttered two grave threats to the supremacy of Parliament in this country. The first was by the Prime Minister on Tuesday when he said

"We cannot help it, but in this Debate we are giving hostages to fortune. Our military advisers have told us in very solemn terms of the dangers of holding such a discussion."

And last night the right hon. Gentleman the First Lord of the Admiralty, after dealing with a similar argument, said

"I hope this will be the last time."

I want, if I may, to read to the House a description which was given of the character of the founder of the family of the right hon. Gentleman the First Lord of the Admiralty.

SIR WILLIAM DAVISON (Kensington, South) On a point of Order. Has the history of the founder of the family of the First Lord of the Admiralty anything to do with the question whether the House should reassemble on 21st May?

MR SPEAKER · I am waiting to find out.

MR EDE : I think you will see, Sir, when I have finished the quotation, that the concluding words will show that it has everything to do with the subject under discussion. Trevelyan said

"Marlborough would not have been England's greatest leader in war if he had not understood the necessary relation between her war effort and her settled constitution. In that understanding he was not surpassed by Chatham himself. Long absences abroad, great victories in the field, the flattery of all Europe never made that cool head forget that he must answer for all he did to the Commons of England."

SIR W. DAVISON Will the hon. Gentleman say how he could answer better on the 14th than on the 21st?

MR EDE Because between those dates steps may be taken, if the spirit of the two sentences which I have read from responsible gentlemen who are at present supposed to sit on the Front Government Bench are carried out, for which we may never have the opportunity of calling on them to answer. I suggest that in these times it is more than ever essential that the House should insist that the Government must answer to it speedily and effectively for the actions that they take. When the lives of millions

brave men are at stake we ought to be assured that as frequently as possible Ministers shall be able to answer here for the use they make of these men and the risks they call on them to run. I speak as one who fought in the last war and I regret to see again the same loss of life and liberty of our troops through the way in which unprepared and insufficiently supported they have been sent into action. This House no matter what our personal feelings may be ought not to separate for so long a period as we are asked to do in this critical stage of the war.

THE PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY TO THE TREASURY (CAPTAIN MARGESSON) Perhaps I may be allowed to say a word on behalf of the Government. I am sure the House will forgive me realising that the Prime Minister and the War Cabinet are meeting otherwise they would have been here to speak for themselves. During Question Time the Leader of the Opposition asked the Prime Minister whether implicit in this Motion was an understanding that the Government would ask Mr. Speaker to call the House together should occasion arise. The Prime Minister gave that assurance to the House. In case there are some hon. Members who were not in the House at the moment let me repeat on behalf of the Government that, should the occasion arise the Government will not hesitate to advise Mr. Speaker of their point of view and ask for the House to be called together at the earliest possible moment. I trust with that assurance the House will agree some discussion having taken place to proceed now to other business.

Mr. McGOVERN (Glasgow Shettleston) I have generally opposed long holidays for the House and I oppose on this occasion because grave events are taking place in regard to the Government. I realise that Mr. Speaker has power to convene the House on the advice of the Government if further events develop. At the same time I am not so greatly carried away by Parliamentary democracy that I think it matters a great deal whether the House meets next week or not because I realise that the Government and the Civil Service usually carry on the country's affairs and will carry on the war.

I want to ask that a few things should be borne in mind by those who advise that the House should meet on Tuesday next. For one thing the Labour Party Conference will be taking place next week and a large number of members of the Labour party will be absent. Then there is the fact that I am going on a cycling tour and shall be away probably for three weeks. I hope the war will not suffer in consequence of that fact.

In view of the fact that there are bound to be negotiations going on during the next few days it might be wise if we gave time for developments to take place. The Labour party have to consult their rank and file at their Whitsuntide conference—it is

a very obnoxious thing to have to do—on whether they will permit them to join the Government or not

Further, I would say in reference to Parliamentary democracy that if the country could see the House as I saw it yesterday they would not be so enamoured of Parliamentary democracy. It was a state of affairs which brings us on towards the stage where people say it is time that we had a Hitler in this country. Therefore, Parliament should be allowed a day or two to cool down. There is also the mood of the country to be considered. I have been attending the by election in East Renfrewshire, and every Conservative I met—and people should understand that I have no antagonisms in this matter—said that the only hope for this country was for the Prime Minister to surrender office. That is the genuine view of every Tory I have met in this country. The task is such that I do not see success being attained by any administration. Therefore, I say "Allow your heels and your heads to cool." Allow the consultations to take place, and let us hope that when Parliament does meet we shall throw up in this country a Government which will realise that the lives and fortunes of millions of human beings are at stake, and that if we are going to wage war it must be waged in a manner that will promote the interests of those people.

Resolved: "That this House at its rising this day, do adjourn until Tuesday, 21st May."

9th May, 1940

MR. LAW (Hull, South-West) I think it is a very remarkable thing that, throughout the proceedings of the Debate of yesterday and the day before, whatever differences of opinion there might have been there was unity in one thing—a determination that this House and this country would carry on this war to a victorious conclusion. I do not think you could have had a Debate such as we had in any one of the dictatorship countries and the fact that this House of Commons could arise in its corporate capacity and urge, not surrender but greater activity and decision is something that may justly strike fear into the hearts of our enemy. Still it was a shocking thing. But I am afraid that the Debate and the Division was quite inevitable.

In my view it was inevitable in the main for one reason, that is that there has been in this House over a number of years too highly perfected machinery of party discipline. The reason that this Debate had to take place was that there was no other way in which Members of this House, who held genuine convictions and who had serious and genuine grounds for uneasiness could bring them to the real attention of the Government. On other occasions when there has been criticism from these benches the whole machinery of party has got into gear, and by a variety of devices and stratagems criticism has been suppressed, those who voiced it have been denigrated and the whole thing glossed over.

lesson we have learned from the Debate is that if you sit on the safety valve of a boiler the boiler will, in the end, blow up. And that is what happened in the Debate. Regrettable though it was I think it was absolutely inevitable. But there are one or two other lessons which we can learn from the Debate. The most important of them I believe to be this: It is that there is a genuine demand and a desire from this side of the House that Members opposite should be associated in the Government of the country at this time and I think Members opposite will recognise from the course of the Debate that we have that desire, that we wish to see them taking their share in government, not because we want to dress up the window or disarm criticism but because we recognise their energy and ability and their love for their country. We wish all who love their country to combine at the present time to save their country. That is one lesson of the Debate. I believe there is another lesson we should learn. There is some talk in some of the newspapers to-day about reconstruction of the Government but I think every Member of the House knows that the thing has got beyond talk of that kind. Effective reconstruction might have been possible some months ago, or even some weeks ago, but the opportunity was lost. I think it is quite clear that there must be a new Government and that it must be, very probably, under new leadership.

Reconstruction and the shuffling about of the furniture again simply will not do this time. I know one of the things which is in the mind of many hon. Members on an occasion like this is the question of the alternative. They say there is no alternative. That is always said on these occasions. My right hon. Friend the Member for Carnarvon Boroughs (Mr. Lloyd George) will correct me if I am wrong, but I believe that the belief existed in December, 1916. . . . My right hon. Friend had a great position in the country, but if there was unity of opinion on one point in the House of Commons it was that neither the Liberal party nor the Conservative party would conceivably serve under my right hon. Friend. That may be putting it rather strongly, but it is broadly true. I think we need not have any fear of finding an alternative now.

The events of the past few days are bound to exacerbate feelings and create anger and bitterness. I hold that we should do all we can to avoid the expression of such feelings. I have differed from the Prime Minister and opposed the Prime Minister on one line of policy, sometimes with vehemence and sometimes with bitterness. But I have never believed that those who were supporting him were actuated by any unworthy motives, I do not believe it now; and those who supported him in the Debate should not believe that those who are opposed to him have been actuated by unworthy motives. I myself have been accused of nourishing a somewhat curious unaccountable personal spite against the Prime Minister. I can assure the House that that is completely nonsense. For a variety of reasons, with which I need not bother the House,

I have always had a high personal regard for the Prime Minister but I do not think that that should cloud my opinions about public policy.

I believe that the leadership of this country since the beginning of the war and in some respects before the war began has been at fault. That is not because I have any dislike of the Prime Minister—that is quite absurd. I would say one thing more. I believe that the Government has not only to be reconstructed but that there has to be a new Government. This has to be done as quickly and as expeditiously as possible and I believe that it is and will be the duty of the present Prime Minister, however difficult it may be for him and however much he may feel that he has earned a rest, to serve in that Government.

MR BEVERLEY BAXTER (Wood Green) Before the Prime Minister accepts last night's Vote as a vote of censure from this House it would be well if he remembered that many of those who voted against him last night from his own party were professional rebels—men that you might call in the City bears who have gone bear on the European situation and have proved right. It was made very difficult for some of us who criticised the Government and hoped for stronger action to vote for the Government last night but the attacks upon the Prime Minister rose to such a degree of unfairness that many of us who were wavering finally decided to go into the Lobby and vote for the Government.

MR MANDER I understand that consultations are going on with those who supported the Government last night to whom the promises were made that if they voted for the Government certain concessions would be made and reconstructions take place. Consultations are going on as to whether it is possible by getting rid of the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Secretary of State for Air, for the Prime Minister to be allowed to carry on with partially fresh colleagues. I venture to say that that is all perfectly useless and will not work at all. We have come to a stage now when there has been a complete parting of the ways. Let me say to the hon. Member for Wood Green (Mr Baxter) that I hope those Privy Counsellors and those young men in uniform who are supporters of the Government and voted against them last night will appreciate being called professional rebels. I think it was a very unfair and unjustifiable charge to make.

We ought to get this point clearly into the minds of Members who would like to see the Prime Minister remain in power. He cannot remain in power because if he did the party truce would come to an end. Things have gone too far and it would be impossible to continue it.

MR MATHERS (Linthgow) Would it not be better for the hon. Member to give it its proper name? It is an electoral and not a party truce.

without victory, there is no survival. Let that be realised, no survival for the British Empire, no survival for all that the British Empire has stood for, no survival for the urge and impulse of the ages that mankind will move forward towards its goal. But I take up my task with buoyancy and hope. I feel sure that our cause will not be suffered to fail among men. At this time I feel entitled to claim the aid of all, and I say, "Come then, let us go forward together with our united strength."

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